DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 294 RC 020 262

AUTHOR	Storer, John H.
TITLE	Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes. Facilitator's Guide.
SPONS AGENCY	Iowa State Univ. of Science and Technology, Ames. Dept. of Health, Human Performance and Sports Sciences.; Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Washington, DC. School Improvement Programs.
PUB DATE	[92]
NOTE	164p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC07 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Communication Skills; Conflict Resolution; *Decision Making Skills; *Early Adolescents; Group Dynamics; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Middle Schools; Peer Influence; *Peer Teaching; *Prevention; Program Implementation; *Rural Schools; School Orientation; *Skill Development; Small Schools; Study Skills; Substance Abuse
IDENTIFIERS	Facilitators

ABSTRACT

This document consists of a facilitator's guide and related materials for implementing a program that teaches social, communication, and study skills to middle school and junior high school students. The goal of the program, which incorporates peer tutoring, is the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse. This program was developed in Iowa to address rural issues of cost effectiveness, limited resources, and small size, while providing sufficient duration to change students' behavior. The facilitator's guide covers an overview of the program, basic group facilitation skills, group facilitative conditions, ground rules, legal and ethical concerns, program implementation, and specific program goals. It also includes a bibliography of 19 works on skill-focused programs for early adolescents, risk and resilience, and the practical aspects of group process and facilitation. The second section of the document provides materials for program implementation and is divided into six flexible content areas that can be adapted to variable meeting frequencies and durations. Content areas include middle school/junior high orientation; planning skills; decision-making skills; peer pressure resistance; social and communication skills as applied to peers, family, and school; and study skills. Each content area consists of individual and group learning activities that facilitate skill development. The third section consists of materials for teaching students to be effective peer tutors. Students who finish "Knowing the Ropes" and "Showing the Ropes" phases of the program act as tutors for new students entering the program. (LP)

ED 387 294

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

KNOWING THE ROPES AND SHOWING THE ROPES

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Thank you for considering implementing *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes* in your school. This program is new and was designed to occupy a particular niche. That niche is to provide skills development experiences that have been shown to be related to the prevention of the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, as well as other negative outcomes. The program is designed for middle school or junior high students in small rural schools.

Schools have recently been inundated with an abundance of non-academic programs and program types. Student Assistance Programs, Peer Helping Programs and Peer Tutoring Programs are program types well known to anyone familiar with schools. The numbers of prevention programs available really are too numerous to mention.

When teachers and school counselors ask us, "What exactly is *Ropes*?", they invariably try to find a frame of reference with some other programs with which they are familiar. "Oh, it's like _____." Our response is the ever helpful, "Sort of."

This is an accurate, if unenlightening statement. *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes* has features in common with many successful prevention programs. It also differs from many popular prevention programs (not to be confused with successful).

Research findings are fairly definite on what works and what does not work in the area of prevention. The U.S. Department of Education's Drug-Free Schools program has summarized these results.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

John H. Storer

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

RC 020262

Programs that focus on presenting knowledge and information about drugs	**There is resounding agreement that programs that focus only on knowledge have not been effective in reducing drug use.**
Programs that focus on attitude change and emphasize personal and social growth, values clarification and feelings	**Research shows that programs that focus only on attitudes have little or no effect on drug use behavior.**
Programs that emphasize knowledge and attitude change	**Even a combination of knowledge and attitudes has questionable effects on drug use.**
Programs that emphasize positive peer influence with specific skills training	**Many researchers agree that resistance, communication and decision-making skills, and peer helper programs appear effective in deterring drug use in average school populations.**
Programs that provide positive alternatives to drug use and emphasize the acquisition of specific skills	**Research shows that alternative programs that provide alternatives and opportunities for recognition and non-drug leisure activities are effective in changing drug use behaviors. Alternative programs that provide special remedial tutoring, one-on-one relationships, job skills and physical adventure can also be effective.** **Peer programs show a significant positive effect on drug use behaviors with little program time, making them cost effective for average school populations. Alternative programs steadily increase in effectiveness with the number of hours of involvement. Although alternative programs are intensive and costly, they do change the drug use behavior of nearly implacable high-risk populations.** **(U.S. Department of Education)**

These results are very clear. Although measured only on the outcome of the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, other risky behaviors such as dropping out of school, pregnancy, delinquency and criminality are so closely related as to constitute a single phenomenon.

We know what works. The problem is developing a program that is:

- cost effective
- sensitive to the limited resources and size of the small rural school
- of sufficient duration to actually change students' behavior

With *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes* we have tried to address these problems.

Less is More

Rural school districts have limited staff, limited money, and a small student body. They also cover a large geographical area. These constraints require accepting the fact that it is impossible to design and implement the perfect program. However, a program that cannot be implemented is useless, no matter how elegant.

Of the three program types recognized by the Drug-Free Schools program as providing effective prevention, the *Alternative Programs* are probably beyond the financial capability of most small rural school districts. Also, the numbers of "implacable, high-risk" children in rural Iowa are relatively small.

That leaves *Skills Acquisition* and *Peer Involvement* programs as options for the small rural school. *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes* seeks to combine these effective program types in a format that is compatible with the constraints imposed by the small rural school district.

These are ambitious claims. Throughout the development of *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes* we have sought the advice of school personnel, professional preventionists and developmental psychologists. While incorporating their suggestions, we have been able to answer most of their questions. Perhaps we can anticipate some of your questions.

What is Knowing the Ropes?

Knowing the Ropes is a behavior change program for middle school or junior high school age children. It seeks to change behavior by facilitating the development of specific skills and providing the opportunity to practice age appropriate tasks in a safe, supportive environment.

It sounds familiar. How does it differ from similar programs?

Knowing the Ropes differs because it is structured around the needs of the small rural school. We realize that small schools cannot afford full time specialists like preventionists, school social workers or Student Assistance Program coordinators. Most must even make do with one,

or at most two, counselors for K-12.

Therefore, *Knowing the Ropes* is designed to require no more than ten hours per month of staff time. **Even these ten hours can be provided by a willing volunteer from the community**.

We also realize that the days in middle school or junior high are very full. The size of many rural school districts can cause transportation problems which make after school or before school programs impractical. Therefore, *Knowing the Ropes* is not divided into lessons per se, but is composed of six flexible content areas which can be adapted to variable meeting frequencies and durations. This is very different from most skills acquisition programs which have a set, sequenced curriculum, with lessons demanding fifty minute meetings. The *Knowing the Ropes* content areas are:

- Middle School/Junior High Orientation
- Planning Skills
- Decision Making Skills
- Peer Pressure Resistance
- Social and Communication Skills as applied to peers, family and school
- Study Skills

Does that really make it different from other programs?

In content it is not different. At first glance, it would appear that with no structured lessons and limited investment by the group facilitator, *Ropes* could only be a weaker version of other programs. This is not the case. While not as intensive as some other programs (one has 95 lessons, another lists 42 skills to be mastered just for substance refusal), *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes* meets a criterion for success most other programs are lacking. **It involves the student long enough to provide sufficient reinforcement for him to incorporate new skills into everyday life.**

Research has convincingly shown that involvement in a skills acquisition program of a typical duration of eight to sixteen weeks (eg. Anderson 1989) has little lasting affect. Involvement must last a year or more to be effective. When combined with *Showing the Ropes*, *Knowing the Ropes* involves the student in using and practicing these basic skills for two years.

What is Showing the Ropes? I thought it was a typo.

Students will be asked to make a **two year commitment** to the behavior change process. In the second half of the first year, students who have completed *Knowing the Ropes* will be trained to act as peer tutors. *Showing the Ropes* is the peer tutoring component of the program. After a student has completed *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes*, he will act as a tutor for a new student

entering the *Ropes* program.

The new student will be involved in a *Ropes* group facilitated in the same manner as was previously described. The new student will also receive one-on-one tutoring from a student who has completed *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes*.

How much time will Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes take?

The time commitment of school personnel must be held to a minimum. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to utilize co-facilitators or community team members acting as volunteer facilitators or co-facilitators.

A suggested schedule for program implementation would have beginning students meet for the first half of the first year, focusing on the *Knowing the Ropes* curriculum. The number of group meetings required depends on the length of the meetings, the age of the students and the components of the curriculum the facilitator feels are relevant to that student population.

During the second half of the first year, you would continue to facilitate the group and work through the *Showing the Ropes* curriculum. This curriculum emphasizes a review of the original skills acquisition experiences in the framework of learning peer tutoring skills.

During the second year, students who participated during the first year would act as peer tutors for students beginning the program. Group facilitation for students in the active peer tutoring phase (year two students) can continue as frequently as your schedule permits. However, if you cannot continue to meet frequently as a group, it is still important that these students maintain regular contact with the facilitator. We have found that a surprising amount of support and advice can be given during informal, unplanned interactions of less than five minutes. These interactions can be in the hallway between classes, in the lunchroom, or the grocery store. Students seem to respond exceptionally well to these encounters on "neutral" territory, and they do not have to be accommodated by either the students' or facilitators' schedules.

It sounds good, but why shouldn't I devote my time to Peer Helping which seems to work well in many schools?

Peer tutoring is somewhat different from peer helping. Springing from a different tradition, peer tutoring is directed toward skill development in both tutors and tutees, with less overt emphasis on social responsibility and commitment than peer helping. It has been found that in skill development and mastery of material, both tutors and tutees achieve more than controls. Also, in some studies, low achieving middle school age tutors make better tutors than higher achieving students.

As used in *Knowing the Ropes* and *Show-*

ing the Ropes, peer tutoring is not intended to provide a significant supplement to the skills development of the tutees, nor is the development of expertise in tutoring a primary goal. **The tutor's continued exposure and skills reinforcement over the second year is the primary goal.**

As effective as peer helping can be, it suffers from two limitations that peer tutoring avoids. The first is that when peer helping is presented as a voluntary program, the at-risk student tends to be under represented. This is particularly true for boys. "Helping" seems to have a feminine connotation in the middle school mind. This is less true of "tutoring".

The second is that when peer helping has a "peer counseling" focus, that is to say is more focused on personal problems and individual emotional issues, "helping" activities require that peer helpers must be supervised much more closely than peer tutors.

We strongly feel that peer tutoring is ideally suited for a program that must be cost effective and sparing of school personnel time. Risk factors are not going to disappear because a student has been through a few group sessions. Involvement should be prolonged, yet facilitator time must be limited. Equally, interest in a limited number of topics cannot be maintained over a two year period without some means of presenting the material in a new format, such as peer tutoring.

Peer tutoring allows the student to practice and develop skills in a way that maintains interest, while allowing the giving and receiving of one-on-one peer support. Peer tutoring also provides an opportunity for giving school-wide recognition for the successful tutor, something often lacking for the at-risk student. These are key elements of a successful prevention program.

Peer tutoring also recognizes the skill deficits putting the student at risk are just that: **skill deficits**. Important adults, and often the child himself, sometimes view risk as a sentence imposed by poverty or poor parenting. A skill focus defines the at-risk child as someone who can be helped without massive social programs which intervene directly on the family.

But ours is a small school with very few students seriously at-risk. How can we justify starting a program for just a handful of students?

The skills taught in *Knowing the Ropes* are not specific to the problems often encountered by the at-risk student. They are skills any student needs to hone and develop. Our recommendation is that *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes* works best in groups of six to eighteen students. This is not a hard and fast rule.

For a school with the resources and the desire to implement such a program, *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes* is very appropriate as a **primary**

prevention program. Primary prevention programs are those delivered to all students regardless of level of risk. Often delivering the program to an entire class alleviates scheduling problems. However, if the class size exceeds or approaches eighteen we would recommend that enough facilitators be used to keep the groups at an effective size.

Our school is specifically looking for something to help kids who are at-risk. How do we determine who is appropriate for the program?

A problem we are very sensitive to is kids who "fall through the cracks" because they just missed the eligibility criteria for some special program. As emphasized in our workshop, "risk" is a phenomenon with multiple causes and symptoms. Different schemes have been developed to quantify a child's level of risk. None seem appropriate for this program.

In our interactions with school personnel one fact was made perfectly clear: you know which kids need help. You are in the best position to synthesize the mix of behavioral, academic and family history factors that indicate risk. Once a suitable group size for your school is determined, our recommendation is to fill the spots available by staffing or faculty "nomination". Remember, with a program suitable for primary prevention it is impossible to make an inappropriate choice.

I disagree. By selecting a student for the program, won't I be labeling that student as at-risk? The other kids will figure out in short order that the kids in Ropes are those with the most problems.

You are right. Some labeling will be part of schooling unless we stop recognizing achievement. It can be minimized.

The *Ropes* curriculum presents the program to students as an orientation to middle school or junior high. This is both accurate and appropriate. The transition from elementary school to middle school or junior high is, in itself, a significant risk factor. It is also presented as the first step toward becoming a peer tutor, something we hope is a positive label.

If risk is viewed as a combination of behavioral, academic, social and developmental factors, a fairly heterogenous mixture of students should be selected. Also, the students most in need of the programs are probably less involved in other extracurricular activities. Fostering the idea that students were asked to participate because they had more free time would be quite appropriate.

Finally, students are very aware of the problems they may have getting along or doing well in school. They are labeled because of these problems. They can be empowered to solve some of their problems.

We will need parental permission for a child to participate. We have had great

resistance from them for other groups we have tried.

Knowing the Ropes is not stigmatizing to the parent(s) like groups for children of alcoholics or children going through divorce. If presented with complete honesty, as a group which teaches social, communication and study skills which may help their child avoid problems later on, few parents will feel threatened. It also lessens parental anxiety if it is pointed out that a relatively large number of students will be participating.

Our middle school/junior high is grades 6-9 (or 5-9, or 7-9, or 6-8, or 7-8, or 5-8). At what level should we use Knowing the Ropes?

The only real constraint is that a student should start the program when he or she will be spending at least two years in the same administrative unit. This is not a hard and fast rule. If the program was started in mid-year it could last one and one-half years, with the tutoring component lasting only one-half year.

The curriculum is written at a fifth grade level, which for the at-risk student might make it more appropriate for a later grade. The developmental tasks involved are appropriate to early adolescence, for which seventh grade may be an appropriate benchmark.

You have answered most of my questions, but our counselor is the only person at our school with training and experience in group facilitation. He is already overloaded. Who is going to lead the group?

Since this is a "skills" group, not a "problems" or "feelings" group, the facilitator does not need special credentials beyond a basic knowledge of group facilitation. We will provide this basic knowledge in the next section of this manual.

A dedicated volunteer with no background in education can still make an excellent facilitator for this program, provided he or she honestly enjoys early adolescents in large numbers (we have heard of such people). Iowa Intervention Initiative staff will be available for support and consultation as groups are organized and implemented.

GROUP FACILITATION BASICS

Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes was designed to require less day to day facilitator preparation time and fewer special skills than many programs. While more highly trained facilitators and more investment of time and resources are desirable, we realize that they may be a luxury many schools cannot afford.

We envision *Knowing the Ropes* as existing in what could be termed a "workshop" atmosphere, rather than a "classroom" or "therapy group" atmosphere.

By this we mean that the facilitator and group members are in a partnership with a well defined common goal. In general, this goal is skill building and mastery, rather than abstract knowledge, insight or self-awareness.

Of course it is not an equal partnership. Adolescents will display different levels of commitment and understanding of the common goals, and will require more or less assistance in achieving their personal goals. A facilitator's support, instruction, reinforcement and role modeling is vital to the program's success.

Fortunately, a great deal has been learned over the last twenty years about facilitating and structuring groups for children of all ages. Many of you are familiar with the basic principles of group facilitation. For those to whom it is new, we will review the essentials that are known to contribute to rewarding, enjoyable group experiences. We will also include a bibliography of works which will allow you to explore the topic in greater depth.

The following information on group facilitation will perhaps be redundant for professional counselors and educators. It is included for the benefit of those who feel they will benefit from a short introduction or refresher.

FACILITATIVE CONDITIONS

R.R. Carkhuff has identified three essential qualities which a facilitator needs to bring to any situation in which he or she wishes to help change behavior and maintain quality communication. These are:

- accurate empathy
- non-possessive warmth
- genuineness

These qualities are particularly necessary for any adult working with early adolescents.

Accurate empathy does not mean that you are expected to get inside a child's head and fully understand his thoughts, motives and emotions. It means that the fears, worries and skill deficits the group member has are to be taken seriously even if you do not understand them or agree with them.

A good rule of thumb is that if a child is hesitant or resistant to doing something, it is because there is some pain or threat attached to doing it. To appreciate, acknowledge and ask about that pain is to have accurate empathy, even though the pain or threat may be illusory.

Non-possessive warmth is simply unconditionally offering acceptance and affection without expecting or demanding that acceptance and affection be returned. Kids unerringly know when an adult is "doing good" because the adult wants being a "do-gooder" as part of their self-image.

Genuineness is just the willingness to be a whole person in front of others. It means not going to extraordinary lengths to hide your flaws. It means a willingness to self-disclose, letting the kids know you have a real life with ups, downs and complications. It does not mean baring your soul and forcing the group to be a sounding board for your problems.

Most facilitators have the facilitative conditions built into them. To consciously practice them in a group context yields a great dividend: when you make mistakes in group (and that could happen) the group sticks with you and helps you out because they know you are worth it.

GROUND RULES

Facilitators must set and enforce the ground rules every group needs. While the ground rules for groups usually do not focus on conduct and behavioral problems, per se, it has been common experience that when basic ground rules are adhered to, behavior problems do not arise. Some typical ground rules are:

- confidentiality: what is said in group stays in group
- everyone has a right to talk
- everyone has the responsibility to listen
- no teasing or making fun
- no hitting
- everyone participates
- everyone is expected to take chances and make mistakes
- no side conversations

Additional, or different, ground rules may be appropriate for your group. The only serious constraint for setting rules is to remember that for group process to aid in reinforcing the principles learned and practiced in group, a cooperative, noncompetitive atmosphere must be maintained. Many at-risk students have a very negative reaction to a classroom-like atmosphere. A free and open atmosphere is important even if it means tolerating a degree of chaos.

Of course having ground rules does not ensure that everyone will adhere to them. When planning this guide it was suggested that we include a section on discipline. Our reply was that our concern was not kids doing things they were not supposed to do, it was kids not doing what they were supposed to do. Group is not a place where a list of forbidden behaviors is appropriate. It is a place where desirable behaviors are encouraged.

Forbidden behaviors offer a challenge to the at-risk student. Specified punishments create a "punishment contract" which the student may feel is an acceptable trade-off. A child's need for attention may be so overwhelming that he may be willing to pay the price with the currency of even severe punishment.

Two principles have been found effective for dealing with behavior problems in groups. The first is **confronting the problem behavior, not the child.**

It may seem trivial to distinguish, "You are disrupting the group!" from, "Your talking is disrupting the group," but the child hears the difference. With "talking" as the focus, you can state how talking in the group makes you feel. You can describe what talking does to the group.

You can activate the second principle, which is **turning the problem over to the group.** People tend to take care of their possessions. Kids who legitimately feel a sense of group ownership will cooperate to see that the group functions well. "Positive Peer Culture" does not have to be part of a special program to work. Very few problem behaviors will be maintained in the face of group displeasure. Of course active intervention is necessary if a child engages in a behavior that is dangerous, or if he or she is clearly out of control.

LEGAL AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

Legal and ethical responsibilities are part of working with children. In addition to a general directive of non-harming and non-exploiting, there are two specific legal mandates.

Please be aware that the abuse of children, even in Iowa, is more common than any of us want to believe. By virtue of the fact that you are working with children, you become a mandated reporter of suspected child abuse and neglect, even if you are not a professional in the field. This abuse can be sexual, physical, or emotional in nature.

Your responsibility to report suspected abuse takes precedence over group confidentiality. Your local AEA or the Department of Human Services can offer training and advice on how to exercise this responsibility.

Additionally, you are also required to report illegal activities. Each school district will have specific policies on issues, such as cheating or student drug use, which must be adhered to.

GETTING STARTED

The way this program is presented to students is vital to its success. Implying that the group is an extra class or form of punishment is fatal. It is important to stress the positive opportunity and privilege of being a group member. Schools will differ in how students are recruited to participate in the program. *Knowing the Ropes* may be voluntary, or required of all or some students. If it is not practical to meet with each participant individually to explain the program and answer their questions, an informational meeting is in order.

In a small school group, members will be well known to each other. A volunteer facilitator may be a total stranger. An introduction which involves sharing some

personal information is a good idea. If the introduction can contain some information that shows you remember something about being an early adolescent, so much the better.

Remembering that the group is a partnership, anything that removes group meetings from a classroom atmosphere is helpful. As some writing is required of students, a "pillows on the floor" setting is probably not appropriate, but the setting should be informal. If possible, it may be helpful for the facilitator to dress somewhat less formally than the typical classroom teacher in your district.

If the facilitator is unfamiliar with the students, it may be helpful to discuss group members with a teacher or counselor to learn special problems or areas of special sensitivity each student may have. Introductions may be necessary, with every effort made to remember names as quickly as possible.

Although group members may have received some kind of introduction or orientation to the program, it is still appropriate to begin with an explanation of the program. Special attention should be paid to explaining "why" there is a program. The group should be very receptive to an explanation centering on the new responsibilities connected with being a new (or about to be) teenager.

Ground rules should be discussed, including the group's active role in resolving conflict. If some ground rules are negotiable, the group's input can be solicited. Additional ground rules can also be proposed by the group and adopted if reasonable.

INTRODUCING THE CURRICULUM

The *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes* curriculum is based on learning skills proven to help early adolescents achieve more and avoid problems. The curriculum incorporates a structured learning process shown to be effective in changing behavior and incorporating new behaviors into a child's everyday life.

As discussed previously, *Knowing the Ropes* differs from similar programs primarily in terms of flexibility. It contains six flexible content areas, but it is not structured in discrete lessons. The topics treated are non-sequential and can be presented out of order or skipped entirely.

It also differs in allowing group members to work independently as much as possible. The rationale and instructions for each exercise are retained in the curriculum to a greater extent than is the case for many similar curricula. This also makes it easier for the facilitators because most of the instructions they need are also contained in the curriculum.

This means the curriculum is somewhat "wordy". Although the text was written at a fifth grade level, the degree of reading required may be difficult for some students. Even with some vocabulary

items defined in the text, it may be helpful for the facilitator to be ready to define and explain some words.

In all cases, it is probably desirable to begin any topic by having the group read the material aloud. This allows poor readers to hear the material and allows the facilitator to stop and check out the group's comprehension of the material if it is in doubt.

The text requires a disclaimer concerning its style. It is written in Normal Conversational English, as opposed to Standard English. That is not to say it tries to emulate twelve-year-old conversation. It means that unfamiliar, albeit correct, constructions are avoided when presenting the skills the students will be reading about (as opposed to "about which they are reading"). This approach has been shown to increase comprehension in low literacy populations.

KNOWING THE ROPES

Knowing the Ropes is not designed to be the ultimate skills acquisition program. It is neither as extensive (one program has 95 lessons) or intensive (another program enumerates 42 skills that must be mastered just for substance refusal) as some other programs. It does present a few basic skills that have been shown to provide a child greater resiliency and protection against risk.

The curriculum presents the skills in formats that usually provide the combination of learning, practice, reinforcing homework and application to life that best assures real behavioral change. While the material could be presented didactically in a few hours, such a presentation has little or no long term impact on the child. *Knowing the Ropes* is a workshop, so all the exercises and rehearsals are important, even when the group members insist they fully understand the skill in question.

A general overview of the six flexible content areas follows:

MIDDLE SCHOOL ORIENTATION

Knowing the Ropes begins with an exercise to develop an awareness of the **child's changing status [pages 1-4]** as he or she moves into middle school or junior high. It is designed to allow an examination of this new status and stimulate discussion about the stresses that go along with adolescence. It also begins the pattern of students generating individual responses and sharing and discussing them with a group.

The **school investigation [pages 5-8]** accomplishes two things: it presents a very simple exercise which most students will be able to complete easily; it then asks the child to pursue some of the more abstract expectations the school environment places on him or her ("new rules" page 8). This exercise encourages approaching a teacher for basic information about a topic less threatening than course

work. Also, students may simply not know all the rules and expectations of their new school.

Recruiting "consultants" [pages 9-10] is also designed to achieve two goals. The first is to open the door for the child's establishing a more supportive and open relationship with school faculty. Many children do not feel they have permission to ask questions of, or discuss problems with, faculty.

The second goal is to formalize the mentoring relationship most students automatically form with other students. The socially isolated at-risk student is less likely to form these relationships, or will form them with peers who provide a predominately negative peer influence.

This is a potentially risky exercise because of the possibility of rejection by students asked to act as consultants (we hope this is not a problem with faculty). Some group time needs to be devoted to discussing rejection, emphasizing that rejection most likely concerns the other student not having the time or not feeling competent to consult. It need not mean he or she does not like or value the student making the request.

PLANNING SKILLS

Making plans [pages 11-18] provides practice in problem solving. It also allows students to articulate situations in their own lives they feel are problematic, and work on solutions with the support and advice of their peers. The facilitator must steer students away from clearly inappropriate solutions while still letting the group or individual discover a better solution. At times, students will propose problems in their lives that are not easily solved, then the "plan" becomes a coping strategy.

The next section **[pages 18-20]** introduces the skills which will be explored throughout the rest of the curriculum. While there are no exercises, per se, it would be valuable to spend time discussing the importance of these skills and assuring that the students understand the rationale for their inclusion.

DECISION MAKING SKILLS

Decision Making Skills [pages 21-45] is a long, complicated section. It introduces a decision making model composed of rules, results, right or wrong, priorities and feelings. To develop the model, the section also contains a sub-section on identifying feelings in oneself and others, and mentions the importance of values clarification for making appropriate decisions.

Values clarification was not developed as a topic in the curriculum since many, if not most, schools already use some form of values clarification. Many short course curricula and exercise books are available on the topic. If your students have not been introduced to values clarification, we would recommend *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students*, by S.B. Simon et al. This book contains

numerous simple exercises appropriate for early adolescents and is most likely in the school library or on the school counselor's book shelf.

The decision making model is built around looking at situations mindful of the criteria of rules, results, right or wrong, priorities and feelings. These principles are introduced by applying them to a sample situation **[pages 26-29]**, by making more complex decisions about situations presented in stories about early adolescents **[pages 30-42]**, and by making decisions about situations in the students' own lives **[pages 42-45]**.

The group will be able to arrive at good decisions with sound justifications more easily than they will be able to apply the concepts they have learned. The facilitator's job is to help them break down their decisions and justifications into the relevant components. It is particularly gratifying for a child to learn that sometimes she automatically does something "by the book".

This section on decision making skills requires many written responses. There are two strategies for completing them. They can either be done by individual students or by small groups within the larger group. Both strategies have advantages and disadvantages.

When working individually, the written responses can be done elsewhere if group time is limited. It also means that the student will have to generate a response to every situation and risks frustration if he becomes stuck at some point. By working individually, a student will not be exposed to the variety of ideas a small group can generate.

Working in groups risks one student assuming leadership and in essence supplying the responses for the group. If possible, mixing the formats is probably the most effective strategy.

PEER PRESSURE RESISTANCE

Peer Pressure Resistance [pages 46-52] is important both for its content and introduction of role playing as a primary learning method. Most students have had an introduction to peer pressure resistance in various drug education programs. They may have also been introduced to role playing in other contexts.

The highly successful (and labor intensive) *Skill-streaming* program has intensively researched the effectiveness of role playing as a means of effecting behavior change.

It has been shown that participants benefit from all aspects of role playing: actor, supporting cast, or feedback-giving audience member. It is important to see that each student participates in all roles more or less equally. This can be difficult because some students are very resistant to such an activity, or they perform very poorly. At times scenes have to be specially created to accommodate the poor role player.

The specific peer pressure resistance methods are not difficult to master or stage. What is more difficult is making sure the group generates a full range of situations in which these skills may be used. Ample grist for this mill can often be found in instances in which a group of kids in your community got into some kind of trouble. Of course you need not discuss details with the group but these troublesome situations do tend to repeat.

SOCIAL SKILLS

Under the heading "Getting Along", *Knowing the Ropes* addresses **social skills** as applied to peers **[pages 53-80]** and family **[pages 81-86]**. Actually, the focus is on specific social skills that can be applied in any context.

The first rule for facilitators in this section is to appreciate the importance of **modeling** as a way of changing behavior. Specific social skills should be used consistently by the facilitator if they are to be replicated by the students.

The beginning of the section does not treat a specific skill. It deals with the process of valuing and evaluating people on the basis of their personal qualities, rather than the cliques they are in or who their parents are. It is the one section that does not lend itself to group work. If done in a group, the exercise can tend to degenerate into gossip about the person whose qualities are being considered. However, a group discussion on a more abstract level is quite appropriate.

Under the heading "Being Approving and Supportive" **giving compliments [pages 59-61]** is the first skill addressed. This skill lends itself particularly well to role playing. It creates short, simple scenes and allows each student to have many practice opportunities.

The next skill addressed is much more complex. **Separating a person's actions from the person [pages 62-64]** is somewhat difficult to understand and even more difficult to consistently practice. Group members were not asked to generate situations in their own lives because of the high probability of reopening a conflict with another group member, or someone well known to the group.

Simple role plays can be created by following the model on page 62. Emphasis should be placed on:

- checking out the situation
- focusing on the person's actions
- sharing feelings
- staying calm and listening

Conflict resolution [pages 65-69] focuses on basic assertiveness training. Many curricula on assertiveness training are available for children of all ages. One of the best basic introductions to the process is *Your Perfect Right*, by Alberti and Emmons.

In addition to role playing the various communication styles, group members are asked to observe conflict situations and analyze the results. This exercise shows the relationship of theory to practice more poignantly than an artificial role play. It demonstrates that real people are really hurt in situations that could have been avoided if the proper skills had been used.

Negotiation and compromise [pages 70-75] again presents a sequenced methodology. It begins with an exercise allowing the students to work through the various contingencies presented by negotiation and compromise situations. These skills can also be further reinforced by role playing.

Entering group activities [pages 76 -80] does not present a skill, but rather an opportunity to brainstorm. As group activities are **very** highly correlated with positive outcomes for children, this section should be vigorously pursued. This is especially important if the opportunities for group activities in your community are limited.

Of course it is not possible to "make" students join a new group as an assignment. Every community may not provide sufficient opportunities and every child's family situation may not allow for this. Your judgement is the best indicator of whether or not joining a new group is a practical option for your students.

Getting along at home [pages 81-86] presents no new skills but emphasizes that skills already learned are appropriate to the family. Early adolescence, although sometimes seeming like the peak of self-centeredness, is a time when children can appreciate that other family members have problems, concerns and conflicts.

STUDY SKILLS

Getting along in school [pages 87-104] presents some very basic organizational and study skills. They are generic and intended to supplement skills already taught in the classroom. Some facilitators may be put off by an exercise that implies that studying be structured around TV. In reality, this exercise often points out that much TV viewing is habitual and not as compelling as surveys of TV watching by children tend to indicate.

Specific academic deficits are not appropriate for treatment in *Knowing the Ropes*. However, if a glaring deficit is noticed in a particular student, it is appropriate to mention your concern. Children can become very adept at hiding such a deficit, even from teachers or in testing situations.

SHOWING THE ROPES

The *Showing the Ropes* group is devoted to learning tutoring principles and reviewing the *Knowing the Ropes* curricu-

lum. This is the most powerful feature of the program. The largest gains in the tutoring process are expected from the tutors, rather than the tutees. Tutoring training and the tutoring process extend the child's period of reinforcement of the basic behavior changes.

The tutoring process offers a novel context for this reinforcement. A student can suffer from "burnout" if forced into drilling the same material in the same way. Reviewing the curriculum with the goal of teaching it also gives the child a different perspective and new insight into its significance. An additional benefit of tutoring is that it allows the at-risk child to be of service to his or her school community and receive recognition for it.

The *Showing the Ropes* group sessions are less rigidly structured than *Knowing the Ropes*. The sessions are designed to:

- review a *Knowing the Ropes*
- brainstorm possible tutoring sessions
- role play prospective tutoring sessions

The initial sessions deal with the qualities of a good tutor **[pages 1-4]** and basic learning principles **[pages 5-10]**. The group members are allowed to "discover" ways to implement the tutor-tutee relationship.

The **Nuts and Bolts** section **[pages 10-15]** directly addresses some common problems. It also provides practice in the planning process and allows a chance to brainstorm other anticipated problems.

The rest of the *Showing the Ropes* curriculum is devoted to reintroducing *Knowing the Ropes* topics, allowing brainstorming and role playing, and presenting a more fully developed rationale for each curriculum component.

The brainstorming cued by the light bulb is designed to allow as free a reign as possible for the students to construct their own approaches to the tutoring process. The approaches the group generates can then be role played.

ACTIVE TUTORING

The phase of the program in which tutoring actually takes place can be structured to best fit in with your school's schedule. If your school has the luxury of sufficient facilitator time, the tutors could continue to meet as a group during this phase. Group time could be spent debriefing students on the last individual tutoring session and reviewing strategies for the next session.

If there is not sufficient facilitator time to run two groups (*Knowing the Ropes*/ *Showing the Ropes* and active tutors) brief contact with individual tutors with an occasional group meeting should be sufficient.

Tutor and client meeting with a *Knowing the Ropes* focus is beneficial regardless of the actual effectiveness of the tutoring.

What specifically goes on in the tutoring sessions is not as important as the fact that two children are meeting and focusing on behaviors that can contribute positively to their lives.

Tutors should be monitored to assure that they are staying minimally on task. The tutors will be documenting their contact time with the form provided in *Showing the Ropes*. The facilitator may wish to copy the form to retain documentation of contact. The original copy is for the student. No grading or formal evaluation of tutors is appropriate under any circumstances. To participate is to succeed.

Success should be publicly acknowledged. We strongly recommend that in addition to a ceremony within the group where certificates are awarded, speeches made and goodies consumed, that some arrangement is made for school-wide recognition. Ideally recognition should be on a par with athletics, music and other extracurricular activities. An evening banquet and yearbook pictures would be quite appropriate.

In conclusion, every school and every child is different. We know we have not anticipated every problem or every solution in implementing *Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes*. Please share your problems and solutions with us. We will offer advice when we can and share your successes with other schools facing similar situations.

If we may be of further assistance to you, please contact us at:

Iowa Intervention Initiative
250 P.E.B.
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011

1-800-432-7713
515-294-8650

BIBLIOGRAPHY

These works describe other skill focused programs for early adolescents.

Alberti, R. E., & Emmons, M. L. (1982). Your perfect right: A guide to assertive living. San Luis Obispo, CA: Impact.

Anderson, G. L. (1988). When chemicals come to school: The student assistance program model (2nd ed.). Greenfield, WI: Community Recovery Press.

Bowman, R. P. (1986). Peer facilitator programs for middle graders: Students helping each other grow up. School Counselor, 33(3), 221-229.

Cone, R., & Sayas, B. W. (1984). Choices: A substance abuse prevention program for junior high students. Deerfield Beach. FL: Health Communications.

Goldstein, A. P., Sprafkin, R. P., Gershaw, N. J., & Klein, P. (1980). Skillstreaming the adolescent: A structured learning approach to teaching pro-social skills. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Russell, T., & Ford, D. F. (1983). Effectiveness of peer tutors vs. resource teachers. Psychology in the Schools, 20(4), 436-441.

Scales, P. (1990). Developing capable young people: An alternative strategy for prevention programs. Journal of Early Adolescence, 10(4), 420-438.

These works deal with overviews of risk and resiliency.

Capuzzi, D., & Gross, D. R. (1989). Youth at risk: A resource for counselors, teachers and parents. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development.

Freeman, S. M. (1989). From peer pressure to peer support: Alcohol/Drug prevention through group process: A curriculum for grades 7-12. Minneapolis: Johnson Institute.

Gilchrist, L. D., Schinke, S. P., & Maxwell, J. S. (1987). Life skills counseling for preventing problems in adolescence. Journal of Social Service Research, 10(2-4), 73-84.

Grady, J. B. (1980). Peer counseling in the middle school: A model program. Phi Delta Kappan, 61(10), 710.

Nathan, P. E. (1983). Failures in prevention: Why we can't prevent the devastating effect of alcoholism and drug abuse. American Psychologist, 38(4), 459-467.

National Commission on Drug-Free Schools. (1990). Toward a drug-free generation: A nation's responsibility. Washington, DC: author.

Rahdert, E. R. (Ed.). (1991). The adolescent assessment/referral system: Manual (DHHS Publication No. ADM 91-1735). Washington, DC: Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration.

These works contain practical information on group process and facilitation.

Fleming, M. (1990). Conducting support groups for students affected by chemical dependence: A guide for educators and other professionals. Minneapolis: Johnson Institute.

Foster, E. S. (1983). Tutoring: Learning by helping: Student handbook for training peer and cross-age tutors. Minneapolis: Educational Media Corporation.

Myrick, R. D., & Erney, T. (1985). Youth helping youth: A handbook for training peer facilitators. Minneapolis: Educational Media Corporation.

Tindall, J. A., & Salmon-White, S. J. (1990). Peers helping peers: Program for the preadolescent: Leader manual. Muncie, IN: Accelerated Development.

Typpo, M. H., & Hastings, J. M. (1984). An elephant in the living room: A leader's guide for helping children of alcoholic. Minneapolis: CompCare.

KNOWING THE ROPES

AND

SHOWING THE ROPES

© 1992 John H. Storer. Limited permission is granted by the author for the duplication and use of Knowing the Ropes and Showing the Ropes by schools and individuals trained in their use at Iowa Intervention Initiative workshops. All other rights reserved.

The production of these materials was supported in part by a U.S. Department of Education Drug-Free Schools School Personnel Training Grant, and by the Deparment of Health, Human Performance and Sport Sciences, Iowa State University.

The author wishes to thank Diana Crosswait and Kristin Scheppler for their insightful suggestions and editorial expertise, and Jill Hastings for her professional advice and personal support.

KNOWING THE ROPES

Welcome to ***KNOWING THE ROPES!*** We call it "ropes" for short. Ropes is what you could call an ***orientation***. An orientation is a time when you learn what you need to know to get along. The army has an orientation. They call it boot camp. Colleges have an orientation. College kids go to college a week or two early to learn what they need to know to get along.

Middle school or junior high school kids need an orientation, too. There's a lot that's new. There's a lot that's different. Some kids learn these new things sooner than others. The kids that learn them first have more fun and do better in school.

The kids who "know the ropes" aren't smarter or better than anyone else. They had someone show them the ropes. Or, they knew how to watch, listen and ask questions until they learned the ropes.

Some of the things that are new in middle school or junior high aren't about school. They are about you. You are older. You have new choices to make. You can do things you couldn't do when you were a little kid. You don't have someone watching you all the time. Learning to handle this freedom and responsibility is a big part of "knowing the ropes." Do you know the ropes?

Some things that can be new in middle school or junior high are:

- NEW SCHOOL
- NEW CLASSES
- NEW TEACHERS
- NEW FRIENDS
- NEW SPORTS
- NEW CLUBS
- NEW BUS ROUTE
- NEW CLOTHES
- NEW CHOICES
- NEW AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK
- NEW RULES
- NEW PRINCIPAL
- NEW COUNSELOR
- NEW FREEDOM
- NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

What is new for you? List the things that are new about your school.

Now that you are older and in middle school or junior high a lot of things are new about you. List the things that are new about you.

Knowing how to get along in a new school or a new grade is not automatic. You have to study it just like it was a subject. Trouble is, there is no book or teacher. Like a detective, you have to gather facts on your own. You have to conduct an investigation. That means gathering all the facts.

You will know a lot of the facts already. Some facts you will have to learn by asking questions. You will never be able to learn everything you need to know. Sometimes, the best thing to learn is who to ask. It may seem like you are the only kid in school who doesn't know the ropes. You're not. Everyone had to ask questions or learn the ropes from watching others.

Even when you have learned all the facts, something may happen that leaves you clueless. When you don't know what to do next, it is hard not to be too scared or proud to ask someone to help you out. It's easier when you have a plan. When you don't have a plan, the easiest thing to do is nothing. You hope you will disappear, or the school will catch on fire, or alien invaders will kidnap your teacher.

Don't count on it. Sometimes it is going to feel like you're a rat in a maze. It will happen less often if you have investigated your school and developed a plan.

INVESTIGATION OF _____ SCHOOL

INVESTIGATOR: _____

GRADE: _____

TIMES

School starts at _____

School ends at _____

The bus comes at _____

I get home at _____

Lunch is at _____

CLASSES:

_____ is at _____ o'clock in room _____

_____ is at _____ o'clock in room _____

_____ is at _____ o'clock in room _____

_____ is at _____ o'clock in room _____

_____ is at _____ o'clock in room _____

_____ is at _____ o'clock in room _____

_____ is at _____ o'clock in room _____

_____ is at _____ o'clock in room _____

_____ is at _____ o'clock in room _____

PEOPLE

TEACHERS:

My teacher for_____ is_____

My teacher for_____ is_____

My teacher for_____ is_____

My teacher for_____ is_____

My teacher for_____ is_____

My teacher for_____ is_____

My teacher for_____ is_____

OTHER IMPORTANT PEOPLE:

The principal is_____

My counselor is_____

The janitor is_____

My bus driver is_____

The school nurse is_____

The school secretary is_____

The coach for_____ is_____

The coach for_____ is_____

The coach for_____ is_____

Another important person is_____

Those facts were easy to find. Other facts are harder. I'm sure that by the time you were done with elementary school you knew all the rules. Then you came to middle school or junior high and some of the rules changed. Can you imagine changing the rules for basketball in the middle of the game? On this page you can list the rules that have changed since elementary school. You may have to do some real detective work and interview a teacher. It is a lot easier to learn the new rules by asking than to find out about a rule after you have broken it!

Another part of a good investigation is discovering people who are good consultants. Consultants are people you can go to for advice or information about something. A good team of consultants keeps you from having to know everything. A good consultant should be:

- **someone you can talk to easily**
- **someone who knows what you want to know**
- **someone who wants to be a consultant**

There is no set number of consultants. Also, one person can be a consultant for more than one thing. Some consultants almost everyone needs are:

- **a teacher you can ask about rules you don't know or understand**
- **a friend one grade ahead of you who has had a year longer to learn the ropes**
- **a friend in your own grade you can ask about homework and assignments**
- **a teacher or counselor you can talk to about trouble at home**

I am sure you can think of other kinds of consultants you may need. It is important to ask someone to be a consultant ahead of time. Then when you need him, he will be ready. Just explain to him that you need his experience and knowledge. Most people will agree to be a consultant. Use the next page to list who you have asked to be consultants. Also list the area each person will be consulting about.

The consulting team of _____

_____ has agreed to be my consultant.

He/She will be consulting about _____.

_____ has agreed to be my consultant.

He/She will be consulting about _____.

_____ has agreed to be my consultant.

He/She will be consulting about _____.

_____ has agreed to be my consultant.

He/She will be consulting about _____.

_____ has agreed to be my consultant.

He/She will be consulting about _____.

_____ has agreed to be my consultant.

He/She will be consulting about _____.

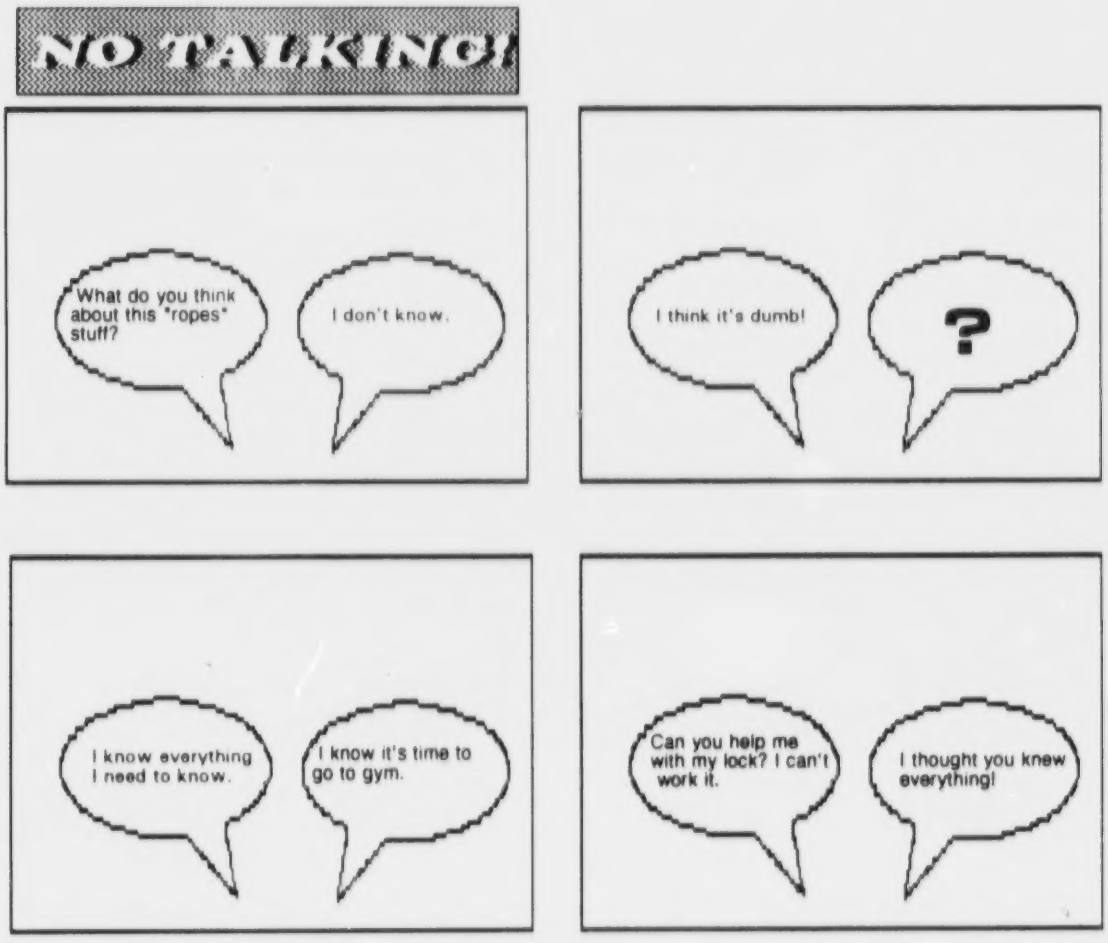
_____ has agreed to be my consultant.

He/She will be consulting about _____.

Great! You have just about completed your investigation. Now you need some plans. It's too bad plans aren't like shoes. Then you could just go to the plan store and pick one that fits. Plans have to be made to fit each new situation.

Luckily, many situations are a lot alike. One plan will fit more than one situation if they are a lot alike. You only have to change a few details.

For the next few pages there are some stories about situations that may have happened to you. Your job is to figure out a plan that will fix the situation without making it scary, getting you in trouble, or making you look silly.


NO TALKING!
What do you think about this "ropes" stuff?
I don't know.
I think it's dumb!
?
I know everything I need to know.
I know it's time to go to gym.
Can you help me with my lock? I can't work it.
I thought you knew everything!

The following stories are problems you need a plan to solve. They are not hard problems, but if they happened to you, they could make you feel badly if you don't have a plan. Write out your plan in the space after the problem. Talk about it with your "ropes" buddies. Or, if that doesn't help, find a consultant!

It is just about time to go to lunch. You know you started out with lunch money this morning, but now you can't find it. You're starving, so you don't want to go without lunch. You also don't want to ask anyone to lend you the money or tell a teacher because you did the same dumb thing last week. You need a plan.

You asked to be excused to go to the restroom. You did absolutely nothing wrong, but when you flushed the toilet, the whole place started to flood. You can't stop it, and you don't want to get blamed for something you didn't do. You need a plan. Quick! (next page)

Your mom and dad have been fighting for three nights in a row over something your big brother did. You are not in trouble, but it has been such a zoo you haven't been able to get your homework done. You are about to get into major trouble. Help!

You know the kinds of problems you have better than anyone. For the next few pages imagine the kinds of problems you might have and come up with plans that will fix them. It will be more fun if you do it as a group.

PROBLEM ONE:

PLAN ONE:

PROBLEM TWO:

PLAN TWO:

PROBLEM THREE:

PLAN THREE:

Plans are great, but there is more to knowing the ropes than plans. It reminds me of a story I heard once. Some people swear it's true.

Once in a small town in Iowa there was a new basketball coach. He had wanted to be a basketball coach ever since he had been a little boy. He watched every basketball game that was on TV. He practiced in the snow and thought about basketball all the time.

When he finally got to be a coach, he had a plan for everything. He could fill a whole chalkboard with X's and O's and not be past the opening tipoff. He had a plan if he was 2 points ahead with 12 seconds left. He had a different plan if he was 2 points ahead with 13 seconds left. He had a plan for guarding a left handed, pigeon-toed forward with a wart on his nose.

He loved his plans. He liked his plans so much that some days the team never left the locker room. They just made plans until practice was over. The team didn't get to spend much time developing basic skills like shooting, dribbling and passing.

When the season began, he had a plan for every team they would play. The new coach dreamed that after his team won every game, he would get a coaching job at a large college. Then, after a few years, he would be coaching in the NBA. He could close his eyes and see himself talking into a microphone, being interviewed after the NBA championship game!

His team went 0 wins and 16 losses. The players didn't have the skills they needed to play well. Half of the coach's dream came true. You may run into him someday . You will find him talking into a microphone....asking you if you want fries with your Big Mac!

You get the point. You not only have to make plans, but you need to have the skills to carry them out. Being older and being in middle school or junior high takes skills you never had to have before. All you have to do is go to the elementary school and watch the little kids for a while to know that you have learned a lot of new skills.

There is still a lot more to learn. Scientists have found out that there are some skills you have to learn at your age or you may never learn them completely. Also, life can get tough if your friends and classmates know skills you haven't learned yet.

Knowing the Ropes doesn't require you to learn things like juggling four oranges at once or making a nuclear reactor in your kitchen. The skills you need are skills that allow you to have more fun, stay out of trouble, have fewer hassles with your friends and family, and do better in school.

You probably have most of the skills you need already. But you may not always remember to use them, or you may not have as many skills as you need now that you're older. It may be true that you and Michael Jordan both play basketball, but without a lot more work, practice and skill, I don't think you can say you play basketball like Michael Jordan.

There are particular skills that are especially important at your age. These are:

- Decision making skills

  Getting older means having more freedom and more choices. In elementary school you probably had one classroom and one teacher and had no choice about what you did from minute to minute. At home you probably had someone watching out for you, someone who knew where you were and what you were doing all the time. That's not true now, although

sometimes it may seem like it. Making good decisions doesn't come naturally. Part of *Knowing the Ropes* is mastering the skill of making good decisions.

- **Peer Pressure Resistance**

  Peer pressure resistance is a fancy way of saying that if the crowd you're going along with is going the wrong way, you are better off going your own way. Of course it's more fun to do most things with a group of kids. When the crowd is doing something that you think could hurt you or get you in trouble, it is hard not to go along. You're afraid someone will call you a chicken or will try to keep you out of the group. *Knowing the Ropes* has some valuable tips about how to stay part of the group without proving you're just as out of it as the kids who can't make good decisions.

- **Making and Keeping Friends**

  When you were a little kid your friends were probably the kids who were close by, especially in the summer. Now you have more kids to choose from. Some kids are more fun to hang out with than others. You admire them, or they make you laugh, or they are friends with other kids you would like to know. Sometimes these kids like you as much as you like them. Sometimes they don't. Sometimes you are good friends with someone for a while, and then you have a fight. Little kids fight a lot about sharing toys and stuff, but they soon get over it. Now friends can hurt each other's feelings when they fight and never get over it. Also, some kids who you may not want to be friends with can make the best friends. *Knowing the Ropes* can help you make new friends and keep the ones you have.

- **Handling Problems at Home**

  It's hard to do your best at school and enjoy your friends and other activities when things are not going well at home. It may be problems getting along with your parents, or brother, or sister. It may be other family members who are having the problem and it spills over onto you. You can't always fix other people's problems, but there are ways to keep them from bothering you so much. *Knowing the Ropes* can help.

- **Handling Problems at School**

  School is never as easy as you would like. It seems like there are always more ways for things to go wrong than there are for them to go right. There are ways of getting along better with teachers. There are better ways of studying. Everything goes better when your school work is going well. *Knowing the Ropes* can help here, too.

- **Becoming More Mature and Responsible**

  I have never met anyone of any age who wanted to be younger. There are too many rewards for being independent and skillful for anyone to want to go backwards. Part of growing up is taking responsibility for those younger or less mature than you are. Taking responsibility means helping, and you are in the best possible position to help some other kids in your school. *Knowing the Ropes* leads directly to *Showing the Ropes:* teaching other kids the skills you have learned. Teaching one person is called tutoring. Once you know the ropes, you can be trained to show others the ropes. Your skills are too valuable to keep to yourself. The best school is one where everyone knows the ropes!

Decisions, Decisions

We make decisions from the time we get up in the morning until we go to bed. Luckily, most decisions are easy. We can make them without really thinking about them. I decided a long time ago never to go skydiving without a parachute. I have never regretted this descision.

Some decisions are not so easy to make. About 99% of our time making decisions is spent making 1% of our decisions. The reason some decisions are hard and some are easy is that there are good things and bad things about deciding either way. That is what the old saying: "You can't have your cake and eat it too!" means. If you eat it, you don't have your cake anymore, but if you don't eat it.....you get the point.

Imagine your grandparents gave you $20 for your birthday. You can buy something special, or take your friends out for pizza, or save it to buy something more expensive, later on. Deciding what to do with $20 is simpler than a lot of decisions.

Decisions involving other people, decisions involving how you use your time and decisions involving what is best for you and what's right or wrong, can really drive you nuts. Like many other things, decisions get easier if you have a plan.

A lot of people have found that if you break decisions down into small parts, they are easier to make. Decisions can be chopped up into mini-decisions involving: rules, results, right or wrong, priorities and feelings. We will discuss all of these parts in more detail.

- **RULES**

  Rules are usually made to make things run more smoothly. The rules a community makes are laws. They are easy to know because they are written down. Rules in families and schools may be trickier. Often you have to ask someone how a rule works in a particular situation. Remember, rules don't have to be fair. They have consequences whether they are fair or not. The first step for making good decisions is knowing what the rules are.

- **RESULTS**

  Results are why you make decisions. You want things to come out a certain way. A lot of decisions have more than one result. This is almost always true when a decision involves other people. So, when making a decision, you

---

NO TALKING!
I like this decision-making part.
Right! I think it will work.
I liked the exercises but they were hard.
I didn't think so. I guess I'm good at it.
I still think they were hard!
Not me. I'm going to start using what we learned for my own decisions!
What decision are you going to start with?
I don't know. I can't decide.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

always have to figure out if your decision will get the result you want. You also have to think about the results your decision will have for other people. A good result for you may be bad for someone else. If you are not sure how good or bad your decision may be for someone, ask!

- **RIGHT OR WRONG**

  This is where it really gets tricky. We learn what's right and what's wrong from a lot of different places. We learn from our parents, our church, our friends and our school. Since we learn from so many different places, not everyone agrees on what is right or wrong. The things that most people agree on seem to be the things there are rules about. These are things like stealing or cheating on a test. Other things have rules but aren't really right or wrong. These would be things like chewing gum in school. Most schools have a rule about chewing gum because gum would end up on the floor, under the desks or in your hair. That doesn't make gum chewing wrong. It makes it a bad idea during school.

  The hardest situations are when there are no rules, but a decision can be right, or wrong, or somewhere in between. For example, imagine if you promised a friend who has trouble with math that you would help him study for a math test. After you made this promise, you found out that you have an English test the same day. You think it is wrong to break a promise to a friend, but you also think it is wrong to take a test without studying. What do you do? If you ask two different people to help you decide, you might get two completely different answers. One person might say that keeping a promise is the most important thing, and another might say doing well on your test is the most important thing.

These two people could even be your mom and dad! Now you have another decision to make about which parent you want to disappoint.

Making hard decisions like this requires knowing about your values. Values are your system for figuring out how right something is, how wrong something is, and how important something is. Hard decisions become easier when you understand your values.

- PRIORITIES

  After you understand your values you can set your priorities. Priorities mean arranging the things you want in order. It also means arranging your values in order. Then you match up the two lists. When your wants and values aren't fighting each other, you probably can make a decision you will never have to regret.

  For example, if we go back to the problem of studying for your own test or helping a friend study, you may feel that you want to do both equally. But, when you look at the values involved, you may feel that doing well in school is the higher priority. You value success in school more highly. If you go with your priorities, you are more likely to be happy with your decision.

- FEELINGS

  We started talking about feelings when we mentioned being happy with your decision. One result of any decision is how it makes you feel. A big part of feelings depends on getting what you wanted. That is not all that changes your feelings.

  I bet when some of you read the part in the last section about studying for your own test, instead of helping your friend, you said to yourself, "What a selfish jerk! You should help your friends." You don't think being a selfish jerk

would make you happy with your decision. Neither would flunking your test because you didn't study for it.

Confusing, isn't it? You paid attention to your priorities and values and still don't feel good about your decision. It gets even more confusing. To feel good about a decision you also have to consider other people's feelings. How does your friend feel because you didn't help him or her? How will your parents feel if you don't do well on your own exam?

It doesn't sound like making decisions is much fun. It's not, if the result is you or someone else feeling badly. Most of the time there are ways you can manage a situation to get the best possible result. For the example of studying for your own test or helping a friend, think about these ways of managing the situation.

- You decide you don't need the whole evening to study for your exam so you can spend half the evening helping your friend.

- You have another friend who is good at the subject your first friend needs to study. You call up the second friend and ask if she will help the first friend study.

- You explain to your friend about having your own test and apologize for not being able to help. Most friends will understand.

- You explain about your own test and say that your friend can call you if he or she runs into trouble.

There is usually a solution that works out best for everyone. Feelings are always tricky. Sometimes it is hard to predict how someone else is going to feel or tell how he or she is feeling. Sometimes it's hard to know exactly what you are feeling. You know you feel good or bad, but you don't know why. It helps to practice naming your feelings. If you know the feeling you are having it is easier to figure out what is causing the feeling.

For the following feelings, write down a time you felt like that. Also, write down why you think you felt like that.

ANGRY:

_____

_____

_____

_____

EXCITED:

_____

_____

_____

EMBARRASSED:

_____

_____

_____

FRUSTRATED:

HAPPY:

SAD:

SHY:

Good! Now, for the same feelings write down a time you thought someone else was feeling like that. Also, write down what made you think that was the way he or she was feeling.

ANGRY:

EXCITED:

EMBARRASSED:

FRUSTRATED::

HAPPY:

SAD:

SHY:

Now you are ready for some decision making practice. Read the following stories in which kids have to make some hard decisions. At the end of each story, decide what you think would be a good decision. Write down how you think rules, results, right and wrong, priorities, and feelings helped you make your decision.

New Kid

Kelli was new in town. She had moved in during the summer. School had just started. The school part of school was going well. She was a little behind the other kids in math and social studies, but she was ahead in science and English. She liked most of her new teachers, and she liked the fact that the junior high was in the same building as the high school.

She didn't like the fact that she had to be in a new school. Kelli's family had moved four times in the last three years. She understood that her dad needed a better job and they needed a cheaper place to live, but she didn't have to like it.

It seemed like as soon as she had made friends, she had to leave and do it all over again. Her mom just said, "Kelli, honey, just be nice, and people will be nice to you." That was easy for her to say. Her mom still had her job in a town fifteen miles away. That's where her mom's friends were.

Kelli was sure she had cried and whined less than most kids her age, but acting grown up didn't keep her from feeling left out. At least the new school was small enough that she had the same kids in most of her classes. It wasn't like the school she attended in Des Moines for six months, the one she called the "factory".

It wasn't all bad. Some kids seemed really nice, especially Kim and Marci. They sat next to her in the classes that were seated by alphabetical order. They were a lot of fun and weren't stuck-up or anything.

The week before report cards first came out Kim and Marci sat down beside her at lunch.

Kim said, "Hey Kelli, there's one more science test before report cards come out. Want to get together with us to study for it?"

"And call up boys," Marci whispered.

"ShutupMarci!" Kim said, like it was one word. "We thought we could get together every day after school until five o'clock, from now until the test.

"That would be great!" Kelli said, trying not to sound too excited. "We can go over old tests and stuff."

"And call up boys."

"Marci!" After shaking her head, Kim continued, "Only problem is we can't do it at my house. My little twin brothers will be home from kindergarten and they're like wild animals. You can't even pretend you're studying. And Marci lives out in the country. She can go home with her mom when she gets off work at five. So, can we study at your house?"

"Do you have a phone?" Marci asked.

Kelli just sat there smiling for what seemed like hours. She wanted to be friends with Kim and Marci more than anything. But when her family had moved this last time, her dad had not been able to get a very good job. They had only been able to rent a little house that wasn't very nice. They also had odds and ends for furniture they had borrowed from relatives. The truth was she was ashamed of her home and furniture. She was afraid Kim and Marci wouldn't want to be her friends is she took them to her house.

Kelli was feeling all warm and uncomfortable and was afraid she was going to cry. She was thinking hard and said, "I think so, but I have to ask my mom. I'll tell you tomorrow." She swallowed hard and was able to smile again. But she knew she had just put off making a decision for one day. What was she going to do?

What decision would you make?

_____

_____

_____

How did rules influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

How did results influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

How did right and wrong influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

How did priorities influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

How did feelings influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

Big Brother, Little Sister

Jason had been held back in second grade. That was a long time ago so it didn't bother him much anymore. At least that's what he told himself. If he didn't have to put up with Lori....Lori was his younger sister. When he was held back, it put them in the same grade.

Most of the time it didn't matter because Lori was a girl, and girls were supposed to do better in school, anyway. Weren't they? The rest of the time it was kind of fun to be bigger and older than his friends. Jason was better at sports than most of the kids in his grade, and his friends respected that. Jason liked being Jason.

Then his dad messed everything up. After the last report cards came out, the family was sitting around the dinner table. Dad pushed back from the table and said, "I think its time you kids raised a calf for 4-H. We can only afford one good calf so you can either raise it together or one of you can have it if the other doesn't want it." Then Jason's dad grinned and said, "Or, if you both want to raise a calf, the one who improves most on the next report card gets the calf."

Jason said, "You mean the one whose grades go up the most, not just who gets the best grades?"

"That's right," his dad answered. "School comes a little easier for Lori so improvement is a fairer test."

Jason and Lori looked at each other and said at the same time, "It's a deal!" Jason was really confident he could improve his grades more. Lori got mostly A's. How could she improve much?

Jason and Lori both studied more than usual and had improved their grades. It was going to be close. On the day of the last big math test before report cards, Jason looked up from his test to rest his eyes. He saw something he had never seen before. Lori was copying an answer from her friend Kathy's paper!

Jason didn't know what to do. If he told on Lori, she would get a low grade in math and he would get the calf. But getting your little sister in trouble was just not something a big brother should do. He was so upset he couldn't concentrate on his own test. He had to decide what to do...quickly!

What decision would you make?

How did rules influence your decision?

How did results influence your decision?

How did right and wrong influence your decision?

How did priorities influence your decision?

How did feelings influence your decision?

Wrong Road

Mary wanted her brother Jack to get his license almost as much as he did. With their mom and dad both working, it was really hard to do anything that required staying after school. It was even hard to spend time with most of her friends since so many of them didn't live right in town. Nobody used the pick-up during the week, and her parents had made it clear that sometimes Jack was to use it to take Mary around.

When the big day came, she was pacing up and down waiting for Jack and their mom to return from the examination. She could tell by the way he got out of their mom's car that he had passed. She knew Jack. He wouldn't show how excited he was if it killed him. He just hung the keys on the hook over the sink and said, "I'm a free man."

"You're not that free," their mom said. "You need to go down to the store to get some hamburger so I can start supper. I thought you also might like to take a spin by yourself." Jack was out the door so quickly he forgot to get money for the hamburger.

For the first month or so it was great. Jack was more than happy to take Mary everywhere she wanted to go. Everyone was impressed with what a careful driver he was.

About a week later it started. Jack had left after supper to "hang out with the guys" but was home by nine o'clock like he had promised. He walked in like he didn't have a care in the world. When he walked past his mom on his way to hang up his coat, she dropped her book and said, "Jack! Come back here!" He hesitated for only a second because by now his mom was standing up and that was serious. "I smell beer. Have you been drinking?"

"Well, uh."

"Come on, tell the truth."

"I, uh, sort of tasted one."

By now their mom was really mad. "At your age, and driving. You know better than..."

Their dad interrupted, "Relax, Ellen. You can tell he's not drunk or anything. It's natural to have a beer once in a while at his age. It's what boys do. At least he's not taking drugs." Mom sat down, but she was not relaxed.

Mary was confused. She had learned about what can happen with underage drinking in drug education at school. The fact that it was only beer didn't make any difference. But she guessed her dad knew best.

The next weekend Mary and two of her friends were walking along in front of the new convenience store when she saw Donnie Olsen come out with two six packs of beer. She was not surprised. Donnie had dropped out of school and had the reputation of being the town hood. Turning twenty-one hadn't improved him.

She was surprised when she saw the pick-up in the parking lot. Donnie walked over and handed Jack the beer and some change. She ran over and tried to talk to Jack, but he just said, "Get lost," and squealed out of the parking lot. He looked and sounded funny. Mary guessed that was what being drunk looked like.

Now she was really confused. She was worried about Jack, but Dad seemed to be on his side. If she got Jack in trouble he would probably be grounded and not be able to give her rides. She didn't know who to talk to or what to say.

What decision would you make?

How did rules influence your decision?

How did results influence your decision?

How did right and wrong influence your decision?

How did priorities influence your decision?

How did feelings influence your decision?

Play or Pay?

Everyone had assumed. No one had asked him. Now Chris was babbling away as they waited for the bus to take them for the first day of school. "Nobody in the conference can touch us. We shouldn't lose a game for the next six years, all the way through high school."

Jim couldn't see what Chris was so excited about. No one expected him to go out for football. Chris hadn't grown since fifth grade. Jim had grown. He was the biggest, strongest and fastest boy in his grade. And he was the best football player. When they played touch football during lunch hour (and tackle when no teachers were looking), there was no doubt Jim was the best.

Trouble was, he could take football, or leave it. Also for the past year, he had been helping out on his Uncle Buck's feeder pig operation after school. He worked hard and his uncle paid him. He knew his mom wouldn't mind if he played football. He also knew that since his dad had left, the fact that he could use his own money for clothes and stuff helped.

He hadn't thought much about football until he ran into Coach at the grocery store. Coach had punched him on the arm and said, "Organizational meeting second day of school," and went on down the aisle.

Jim had been wondering what he would do about football ever since. Coach also coached baseball in the spring. Jim did care about baseball, a lot. He was worried that the coach would hold it against him when he went out for baseball. Besides, who in his right mind would rather work on a pig farm than be a football star?

He knew baseball just wasn't as important as football. They played baseball games after school and nobody came. They played football at night and everybody came. He also thought he could give up the money from Uncle Buck for one season, but not for both.

Chris was still babbling. When they saw the bus coming, Jim said, "I haven't decided if I'm going out for football." Before Chris could answer, Jim grabbed the edge of a seat with two kids already in it. He didn't want to sit with Chris. He didn't want to talk. He had to think.

What decision would you make?

How did rules influence your decision?

How did results influence your decision?

How did right and wrong influence your decision?

How did priorities influence your decision?

How did feelings influence your decision?

You can see how decisions are not always easy. The decisions the kids in the stories had to make are probably like some of the decisions you face. But they are not the same. Next, write down some problems you have solved, or need to solve, and the decision you made about the problem. Show how rules, results, right and wrong, priorities, and feelings helped with your decisions.

Your Problem.

What decision would/did you make?

How did rules influence your decision?

How did results influence your decision?

How did right and wrong influence your decision?

How did priorities influence your decision?

How did feelings influence your decision?

Your Problem.

_____

_____

_____

What decision would/did you make?

_____

_____

_____

How did rules influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

How did results influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

How did right and wrong influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

How did priorities influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

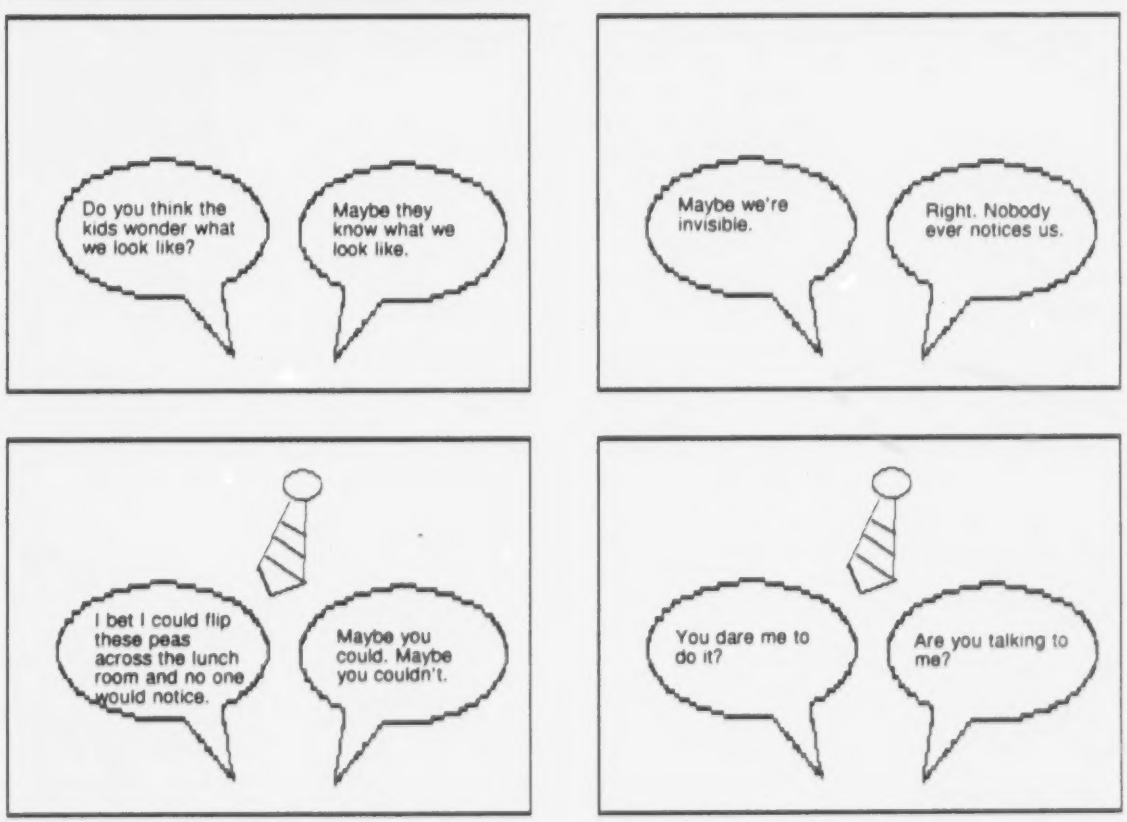
How did feelings influence your decision?

_____

_____

_____

NO TALKING!


Do you think the kids wonder what we look like?
Maybe they know what we look like.
Maybe we're invisible.
Right. Nobody ever notices us.
I bet I could flip these peas across the lunch room and no one would notice.
Maybe you could. Maybe you couldn't.
You dare me to do it?
Are you talking to me?

Peer Pressure Resistance

Being made to do something you don't want to do is part of life. This is even true for adults. Don't say I didn't warn you.

Most of the time the person making you do something you don't want to do is an adult who really wants the best for you, like a parent or teacher. Other kids can also make you do things you don't want to do. When kids make you do something, it is called **Peer Pressure** because your peers are kids more or less the same age.

Other kids can't force you to do things in exactly the same way as adults. They can't ground you or give you a bad grade. They can still put a lot of pressure on you. They can tease you. They can try to keep you out of the group. They can say bad things about you to other kids. They can stop being your friend. That's a lot of pressure.

Sometimes peer pressure can be a good thing. When a bunch of kids encourage a kid who has just moved in to be part of the group, that is positive peer pressure. If your friends keep asking you to try out for the school play when you think you are too shy, that's positive, too.

Most of the time peer pressure isn't so positive. They say, "Misery loves company." Kids who do things that get them in trouble, or are dangerous or risky, usually want an audience so they can show off. Or, they are scared to do something on their own. Misery loves company.

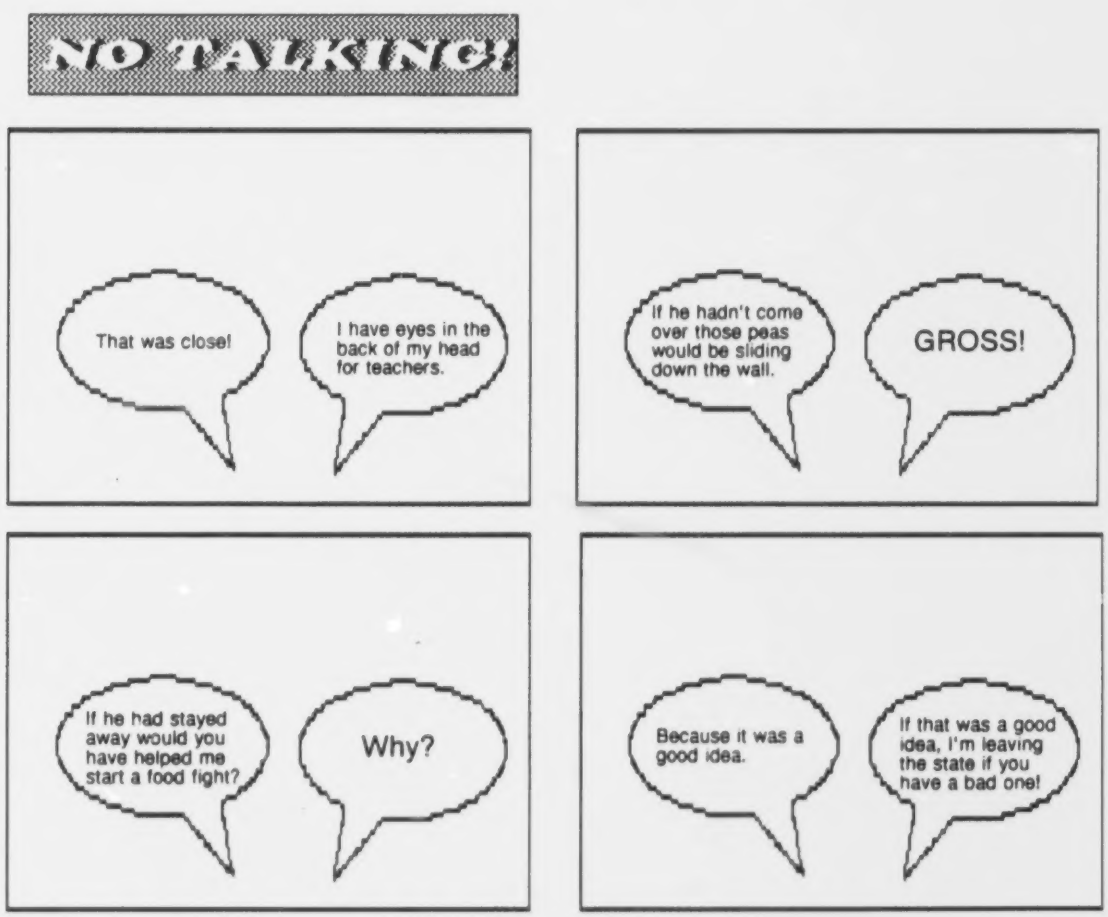
Sometimes it is just one other kid who tries to get you to do something you don't want to do. Sometimes it's a group of kids. That's when it's hardest. No one wants to be weird. It can feel like you are weird if you are the only one of the group who thinks something is trouble. **Remember: most of the other kids probably feel just like you, but they don't want to be weird, either.**

So, when the group wants to do something that you have decided is trouble, you are not alone.

You may not have noticed, but you just learned the first skill you need to resist peer pressure. That is deciding if the thing you are being pressured to do is trouble. These decisions work like other decisions. The "Ropes" system, using rules, results, right and wrong, priorities and feelings, works fine!

That's the good news. The bad news is that to resist peer pressure, you need to practice some skills besides deciding if a situation is trouble. Knowing a situation is trouble doesn't solve the problem if you know you are going to be teased, or left out, or made

---


NO TALKING!
That was close!
I have eyes in the back of my head for teachers.
If he hadn't come over those peas would be sliding down the wall.
GROSS!
If he had stayed away would you have helped me start a food fight?
Why?
Because it was a good idea.
If that was a good idea, I'm leaving the state if you have a bad one!

fun of if you don't go along with the group. *Knowing the Ropes* can help.

"Just saying no" works sometimes, but not all the time. What works best is knowing a bunch of different ways to say no. There are ways to say no that keep you from being called a "wimp" or "chicken." There are ways to say no that let you stay part of the group. There are ways of saying no that can even keep the group from doing the dumb thing they were going to do in the first place. Here are some of the ways.

- Just saying no

  This works more often than you may think. Of course there are lots of ways of saying no. You can say:

  I don't want to.
  I had better not.
  I can't.
  No way!
  That's not for me.

  You can probably think of a hundred other ways to say no. Just make sure it is really "no" you are saying. If you leave room for "bargaining" like, "Why should I?" or "Won't we get in trouble?" you may get talked into something you don't want to do.

- Leave

  If the other kids don't hear "no" when you say it, it is a good idea just to leave. Most of the time no one will be too worried about why you are leaving and may not even notice. If you leave like you have somewhere to go and are not running away, no one will say anything. When you leave, stay gone. Remember: you can get in just as much trouble by being where trouble happens as by actually causing trouble.

- Ignore

  If you are only with one other kid or there is just no place to go, it's hard to leave. Ignoring something that could be trouble can work. For example, if the guy sitting behind you asks for the answer to a test question, if you keep working like you are concentrating and don't want to be bothered, he will soon get the message. Even in a group, ignoring a dumb idea may give them the message that it wasn't such a good idea.

- Make an excuse/Give a reason

  When someone just will not take "no" for an answer, making an excuse can help. An excuse keeps other kids from asking the question, "Why not?" The great thing about excuses is that they give you a reason to leave without being call a chicken or goody-goody. Some golden oldie excuses are:

  I have homework.
  I have chores.
  I have to practice (basketball, trombone, etc.)
  I'm grounded.
  I feel sick.

  You can be creative. The truth is, doing anything makes more sense than hanging around where trouble is about to happen.

- Changing the subject

  Changing the subject can work so well, most of the time no one notices it happened. It sends the message that you are not at all interested. It also gives the other kids something else to talk about. For example:

  "I bet I can hit that street light with a rock."
  "I think the Cubs need a new manager."

Or,

"If we all sit behind Sharon, we can copy off her paper."
"I heard that Tiffany tried to call Bryan last night and his dad answered."

- Make a joke

  If you can make a joke, it shows that you don't take someone's invitation to trouble seriously. It doesn't have to be a great joke. It also shouldn't be a put down. Put downs just make the other person try harder to get the group to do what he wants. Any kind of snappy comeback gets you off the hook.

  "And cancel my date with Luke Perry?"
  "Right, and then we can rob a bank."
  "Didn't a bunch of third graders do that last week?"

  I'm sure you can think of better comebacks. It doesn't hurt to have a couple in reserve in case you need them.

- Come up with a better idea

  This one always works if you can come up with a better idea. Kids will always choose something that sounds like it would be more fun, or work better, than an idea that looks like trouble.

  "I bet I can hit that street light with a rock."
  "But can you hit the basket with a ball? Let's go shoot some hoops."

  Or,

  "If we all sit behind Sharon, we can copy off her test paper."
  "She takes really good notes. If we ask her to study with us, we can get a better grade with no risk."

You can see there are better ways of saying "no" than just saying no. These other ways of saying no take skill, and developing skill takes practice. A good way to practice is a role play. A role play is like any other play except that instead of reading from a script you make it up as you go along.

Like other plays, a role play needs actors and an audience. For practicing peer pressure resistance skills you need someone to play the parts of a kid or group of kids trying to pressure someone into doing something that spells trouble. You need someone playing the part of the kid using peer pressure resistance skills, and you need a scene. The scene is a situation that could lead to trouble.

You can think of lots of scenes. When you think of a scene, divide up the roles you want to play. For this type of play the audience is as important as the actors. Their job is to review the play by identifying which resistance skills were used and judging how well they were used....like a movie reviewer. Unlike a movie reviewer, the audience can give suggestions about improving the play. The actors and actresses can do it again and again.

Peer pressure resistance deserves lots of practice so you should do lots of plays. Everyone needs to practice all the skills. You can use the next page to keep track of the skills being used and your suggestions for improving the play. Get enough copies made to review all the plays.

SCENE

SKILLS USED

SUGGESTIONS

SAFETY RULES

YOU, AND ALL KIDS EVERYWHERE, HAVE A RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE! It is impossible to handle other problems if safety is a problem. You should not have to worry about your safety. You have rights.

You have the right to be free of the fear of physical and emotional injury. No other kid, or group of kids, or adult should hurt you or threaten to hurt you. This includes parents, teachers, and other important adults.

Adults do have the right to discipline you. This is often called a logical consequence. It means that if you do something you shouldn't do (like cheat on a test), there will be a price to pay (such as getting an F on the test and being grounded for a week). Discipline or logical consequences should never leave a bruise or injury.

An injury is punishment that leaves a scar, or mark, or keeps part of your body from working right after more than a few minutes. If it does, you need to get help. Keep trying to get help until an adult believes you and helps you.

The same thing is true if it involves other kids. It could be a kid who beats you up because he or she is mad at you or doesn't like you. Or, it could be a group of kids who threaten to beat you up if you don't give them money. Again, you need to do whatever you can to get help.

Another threat to your safety is sexual. No one is allowed to touch you, threaten you, or force you to do anything sexual. This includes parents, brothers and sisters, teachers, other kids, or even someone you may be dating. Help is available by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-362-2178. This is a toll-free number, which means it will not cost any money to call and talk with someone who can help you.

There are other toll-free numbers that might help you or someone you know.

National Youth Crisis Hotline - 1-800-448-4663
National Runaway Switchboard - 1-800-621-4000

Getting help is the only way of making someone bigger and older than you leave you alone. You have probably talked about physical and sexual abuse in school and know who you are supposed to talk to. It doesn't hurt to have a backup or two. You may not feel comfortable with one person or that person may not be available when you need to talk.

This is such an important kind of consultant that each consultant should understand what his or her responsibilities are. You should get at least two adults to sign up as your safety consultants.

I,_____ , agree to act as safety

consultant for _____. I understand that I will take him or her seriously, believe him or her, and help him or her do whatever it takes to stop the threat to his or her safety.

I,_____ , agree to act as safety

consultant for _____. I understand that I will take him or her seriously, believe him or her, and help him or her do whatever it takes to stop the threat to his or her safety.

MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS

Making and keeping friends is important to people of any age. Making and keeping friends is especially important to kids starting middle school or junior high. Many kids move from a small elementary school to a bigger middle school or junior high. The new students you meet are strangers. They can be friends, or they can be enemies, or they can be something you bump into in the hall. **And they see you the same way.**

Also, old friends will probably make new friends and may not have as much time for you as they did before. That can hurt.

Believe it or not, scientists have spent a lot of time studying how kids make and keep friends. They found that for younger children, friends were mostly playmates. Little kids who played together and didn't fight were friends. The focus of their friendship was the games or toys they shared.

For you, the focus of friendship is your interaction with the other person. When you get together with a group of friends, sharing you thoughts, feelings and common experiences are the things that make it fun. You may still play a game, but the interaction is more important.

Sharing a toy is no big deal, but you only want to share your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust and care about. Scientists have found that kids your age have fewer friends than younger kids, but your friendships are closer and more important.

One reason they are more important is that you have more time for them. You are on your own more. You have more choice over who you spend time with. This freedom also means it hurts more if you don't have as many friends as you would like, or your friends don't

treat you as well as you would like. *Ropes* can help.

There is an old saying: "You know a man (or woman) by the company he (or she) keeps." This is probably more true in middle school or junior high than anywhere. In your school there are probably groups of kids who are "IN" and groups who are "OUT." Most kids would rather be "IN" than "OUT."

This is a shame because it keeps some very good friendships from happening. It starts a vicious circle. One kid doesn't make friends with someone because he is worried that the group will think less of him. Other kids in the group are doing the same thing. So, everyone misses out on having a good friend, and someone is hurt because he is kept out of the group.

Friends are made because of the good qualities they have. Some of these qualities are:

SMART	FUNNY	STYLISH
LOYAL	SERIOUS	UNDERSTANDING
DEPENDABLE	LIVELY	ATTRACTIVE
HONEST	INTERESTING	WITTY
GOOD LISTENER	GOOD ATHLETE	
PATIENT	KIND	SPONTANEOUS
GENEROUS	CLEVER	KNOWEDGEABLE
PROUD	HUMBLE	CONFIDENT
OUTGOING	QUIET	TALKATIVE

You can probably add qualities to this list. You can also see that no one person can have all these qualities. Now, think of a friend of yours and go back to the list on the last page and circle the qualities he or she has.

Good. You can see that your friend has some of the qualities but is a long way from all of them. Look at the same list and circle the qualities you have.

SMART	FUNNY	STYLISH
LOYAL	SERIOUS	UNDERSTANDING
DEPENDABLE	LIVELY	ATTRACTIVE
HONEST	INTERESTING	WITTY
GOOD LISTENER	GOOD ATHLETE	
PATIENT	KIND	SPONTANEOUS
GENEROUS	CLEVER	KNOWEDGEABLE
PROUD	HUMBLE	CONFIDENT
OUTGOING	QUIET	TALKATIVE

You can see that you don't have all the good qualities there are, either. Now, think of someone you know, but who you would not really call a friend. Look at the list on the next page and circle the qualities you think this person has.

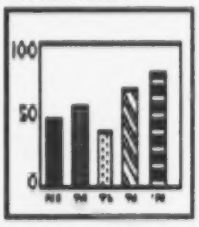
SMART	FUNNY	STYLISH
LOYAL	SERIOUS	UNDERSTANDING
DEPENDABLE	LIVELY	ATTRACTIVE
HONEST	INTERESTING	WITTY
GOOD LISTENER	GOOD ATHLETE	
PATIENT	KIND	SPONTANEOUS
GENEROUS	CLEVER	KNOWEDGEABLE
PROUD	HUMBLE	CONFIDENT
OUTGOING	QUIET	TALKATIVE

Isn't it surprising how many good qualities this person has! Since you don't know him or her as well as you know your friends or yourself, he or she probably has good qualities you don't know about.

"Wait!" You are saying, "The reason I'm not friends with this person is because of his or her bad qualities."

Sure. Everyone has bad qualities. But, friends seem to not worry about the bad and see mostly good. The best way to see a person's good qualities is to show them yours. In other words, be friendly.

I try really hard but still can't seem to make friends.



You may feel like you are the only kid who can say this. You're not. These scientists I keep talking about found that over half the kids they talked to had trouble making friends. Almost 10% said they had no friends at all. That's really sad. It doesn't have to be that way.

The scientists found that kids who had a lot of friends had mastered three skills that kids who had trouble making friends didn't have. These skills are:

- Being approving and supportive
- Managing conflicts appropriately
- Entering group activities

The scientists also found that these skills could be improved with practice. The kids who mastered these skills really did start making more friends. It works! Also, all of these skills fit together. Each skill you master makes the other skills easier to learn.

Being Approving and Supportive

You are, no doubt, usually approving and supportive of you friends. But remember, before you have a friend you have a stranger or an acquaintance. The easiest way to be approving is to pay a compliment.

Paying compliments should be easy, but it isn't. Many of us feel embarrassed when paying compliments. We worry that the person we are complimenting will think we are not sincere or that we are trying to get something from him. Or we worry that pointing out something good in someone else will point out something bad in ourselves. (How can I compliment her on getting a "B" when I got a "C"?)

When we are embarrassed, we often try to cover it up by making a joke.

"I didn't know they made such nice shoes that big."

Or we try to take the compliment back at the same time we are giving it.

"Your new shoes aren't too bad."

The best compliments are straightforward. They are not gushy or silly.

"I just love your new shoes. They are the most fabulous, fantastic, out of this world shoes I have ever seen in my whole life!"

The best compliments are serious. It doesn't hurt to make it obvious.

"Seriously, I really like your new shoes."

The best compliments are made with eye contact. Looking someone in the eye works. No one will doubt your sincerity if you look him or her in the eye.

The best compliments are not saved up until someone does something outstanding. You don't need to cure cancer or beat Michael Jordan one-on-one to need a compliment.

"That was an interesting question you asked in class."

The exact words you use to compliment someone are not that important. I am sure you can easily think of ten phrases you can use to compliment someone.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Like any skill, giving compliments should be practiced. Besides giving the compliment, finding something to give a compliment for needs to be practiced. Get a partner from your "Ropes" group and find ten things you can compliment your partner for. Use the ten phrases you wrote down. I bet you will find it easier to give compliments "out in the real world."

NO TALKING!
I paid someone a compliment and he told me to get lost!
That's kind of mean.
I used eye contact and the whole bit.
That's strange! What was the compliment?
I said I thought he was the smartest kid in seventh grade.
That shouldn't make anyone mad.
I forgot he was in eighth grade.
You may need more practice.

Another skill is necessary for being approving and supportive. This one is tricky because it's not an action. It is a point of view. It is separating a person's actions from the person. It is also the first stage of ***Conflict Resolution.*** Many friendships end because a friend has done something mean or thoughtless and we decide he or she is no longer a good person, because of one action.

Sometimes we expect too much from our friends. We want them to be perfect. When friends do something that hurts us or makes us angry, it is natural to wonder if they are really our friends.

Everyone makes mistakes and everyone has pressures and problems we may not know about. Chances are the thing our friend did that hurt us or made us angry was a mistake. It was a mistake caused by something that has absolutely nothing to do with you. Or, maybe your friend was making a joke and it was such a bad joke you didn't get it. For example:

Kim and Marci were leaving the classroom after getting back their math test. The two friends had been battling math all year, so when Kim got her first B+ she wanted to give Marci the news.

"Marci! Look at this. I got a B+, my best grade ever!"

"Big deal," Marci said with a sneer. "Nerds are supposed to get good grades, aren't they?"

Kim stopped in her tracks. She didn't know what to think. She hoped no one heard what Marci said. She didn't know what to do next.

ENDING 1

"I'll show her!" Kim thought. *"If she wants to treat me that way, just wait until I tell the kids what I know about her."*

ENDING 2

Kim was shocked. It hurt to be called a nerd. It wasn't at all like Marci. She knew she needed to check it out. "It really hurts when you call me a nerd," she said, staying as calm as she could. She didn't want to make it worse by getting mad. Kim just wanted to let Marci know how she felt.

After a minute Marci sighed and said, "I'm sorry. It's just that after all the studying we did, I still only got a C. I don't think you're a nerd."

ENDING 3

Kim was shocked. It hurt to be called a nerd. It wasn't at all like Marci. She knew she needed to check it out. "It really hurts when you call me a nerd," she said, staying as calm as she could. She didn't want to make it worse by getting mad. Kim just wanted to let Marci know how she felt.

Marci managed to grin and look embarrassed at the same time. "I'm sorry, Kim. I was joking. You're my best friend, so if you were a nerd that would make me a nerd, too. I guess sometimes I try too hard to be funny."

You can see that Endings 2 and 3 were happy endings. Ending 1 started a feud that could have gone on for a long time. Kim did four things in Endings 2 and 3 that allowed a happy ending to happen:

- She "checked out the situation."
  If Kim had walked away and not said anything she never would know what Marci was doing. In Ending 1 Kim jumped to the conclusion that Marci was trying to hurt her. It's easy to jump to conclusions if you don't "check out the situation."

- She "focused on the person's actions."
  If Kim had responded, "Marci, you make me so mad!" or, "Marci, why did you hurt me?", it would have been saying that Marci was a bad

person. When someone calls you a bad person, it's natural to defend yourself. You end up not even talking about the original problem, which was Marci's action.

- She "shared her feelings."
  Kim didn't accuse Marci. She told her how she felt (it hurts), and why she felt that way (you called me a nerd). She didn't say, "You owe me an apology," or try to make Marci do something to make it up to her. Kim gave Marci the facts and gave her a chance to respond. To force an apology from someone is emotional blackmail. You may get the apology, but you lose the friend.

- She "stayed calm and listened."
  If Kim had gotten angry and yelled at Marci, Marci would respond to Kim's anger, not her words. Staying calm means you have a "wait and see" attitude. You are not judging a person before you know all the facts. If you are upset, it's easy to not listen. You are thinking about what you are going to say next. If you have already decided your friend is some kind of monster, you won't hear a word she is saying.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Confict is part of life. Any time two people are together they are going to disagree about something. How you resolve or fix conflicts has a lot to do with how you make and keep friends. It also determines how full of hassles your life is.

People often use the word "conflict" as if it means "war": for example, "The Vietnam Conflict" or "The conflict in the Middle East." That's too bad, because unlike war, conflict between two people can end with both people winning.

The goal of conflict resolution is making the conflict a win-win situation, rather than a win-lose or a lose-lose situation. Anytime you find yourself in conflict with another person, one of four things can happen.

- You can give in. The other person "wins" and you "lose". You have resolved the conflict, but not in a way that makes you feel good. You certainly are not likely to want to be friends with this person or even be around him or her. You won't feel good about yourself or the other person.

- You can force the other person to give in. You may think this is a good way to resolve conflict because you get your way. Trouble is, you have, "won the battle but lost the war." You have strained a friendship or made an enemy. You may have earned a reputation of being bossy or pushy.

- You can fight. Whether you fight with words or fists, the result is the same: the conflict is not resolved. The fight may have a winner and a loser because one person is stronger or has a nastier mouth. The conflict is not resolved. You both lose.

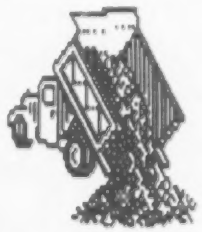
- You can resolve the conflict by assertively stating your position, negotiating and compromising. If you can pull this off, both people win. You both win because you get some (but not all) of what you want. You also win because you have kept a friend or avoided making an enemy.

Sounds simple, but it isn't. Assertively stating your position, negotiating and compromising are some of the hardest skills we teach in *Ropes*. They are hard because you usually have to use them when you are angry or upset. The other person is probably angry or upset, too. They require a lot of practice.

Assertive Statements

When you find yourself in conflict with another person, you communicate in one of three ways: passive, aggressive, or assertive. The person who is usually passive is the kid who has a reputation of being shy or timid. He is someone who gets along by letting other kids have their way. He doesn't have the skills to resolve conflict any other way. He may have a reputation of being a chicken, a wimp, or a doormat. It is more likely that he believes it is wrong to start fights or push people around. With the proper skills, it is possible to resolve conflict and not fight or push people around.

The aggressive person is someone who tries to get his way by forcing others to give in. "Force" may mean fight, but more often he tries to get his way by yelling, pestering, nagging or threatening. He may have a reputation of being mean, or having a temper, or of just being bossy or pushy. Either way, he has trouble getting along because other kids are either afraid of him, or afraid of being "dumped on".



The assertive person is one who has mastered the skill of being straightforward and honest in the way he communicates. He is also a person who thinks enough of himself that he believes his wants and ideas should be taken seriously. Unless you have the skills to communicate assertively, being straightforward and honest doesn't always help resolve conflicts.

The first step in communicating assertively is believing that you have the right to make your feelings and wants known. You do have the right, you know. Other kids aren't mind readers. Many times we feel hurt because another person does something that hurts our feelings or selfishly ignores what we want. If we want someone to consider our wants and feelings, we have to tell him what they are.

"I" STATEMENTS

The assertive communicator takes responsibility for her wants and feelings. The best way to do this is using what we call an "I" statement. "I" statements take the form, "I feel _____ when you_____." or "I want (you to) _____."

This may not seem like a big deal, but think about the sentence you hear a lot: "You make me so angry!" Compare it with: "I feel angry when you change the channel in the middle of a show." The first sentence doen't say very much. The other person learns that he makes you mad, but he doesn't know what to do about it. It also turns control of your feelings over to the other person. If another person can "make" you feel a certain way, you're at his mercy.

The "I" statement should be said as calmly as possible. If it's said like a threat, in a loud threatening voice, it will be heard as a threat. If it's said like an apology, in a little mousy voice, it will be heard as an apology.

In the example of someone changing channels in the middle of a show, the passive response would be: " ". That's right. It would be no response at all. The person watching TV would sit there like a lump feeling sorry for himself and getting angry at the other person for being so selfish. The other person would probably just think the "lump" wasn't really interested in the show they were watching.

The aggressive response would be something like: "What do you mean changing the channel! I was watching that. Change it back, or else!" This sounds like a fight ready to happen. By the time the argument stopped, both TV shows would be over.

Situations where kids need to express their feelings or make their wants known happen all the time. Instead of making up stories about assertive communication, it is time for some (sorry) homework. Between now and the next *Ropes* meeting, look for examples of passive, aggressive and assertive communication. It can involve you, or you can observe other kids. Try to find at least one example of each kind of communication.

After you observe the situation write down:

1. **How the situation started**
2. **What each person said**
3. **How each person seemed to be feeling (scared, angry, nervous, etc.)**
4. **How the situation ended (things like who got what he wanted, how he seemed to be feeling, and if the situation helped or hurt a friendship)**

Please change people's names to protect the innocent.

At the next meeting, share your observations with the group. Identify examples of passive, aggressive and assertive communication. Then, match the kind of communication with the way the situation ended. I bet you will find the situations where assertive communication was used had happier endings.

Since assertive communication takes a lot of practice, discuss the situations where passive or aggressive communication was used and think of ways they could be turned into assertive communication. Now, practice the assertive communications by role playing them.

Whew! That was a lot of instruction. Let's summarize.

- √ **Observe situations in real life**
- √ **Write down what was said**
- √ **Write down how the "actors" felt**
- √ **Write down how the situation ended**
- √ **Discuss the situations in group**
- √ **Choose the kind of communication used**
- √ **Match the kind of communication with the kind of ending**
- √ **Turn the passive and aggressive communication into assertive communications**
- √ **Practice by role playing**

NO TALKING!
I am so mad!!
Do you know that "mad" is supposed to mean "crazy"?
Don't be smart. I'm really mad!
Sorry. What are you mad about?
My parents aren't going to throw a birthday party for me this year.
Did you ask them to?
What! And let them think I wanted one?
Did you know that "mad" is supposed to mean "crazy"?

Negotiation and Compromise

About twenty years ago when assertive communication was first taught, a lot of people thought it was a way to make people do what you wanted. It's not. It's a way of allowing others to know how you feel and what you want. Sometimes, even after a perfect assertive communication, you find yourself still in conflict. This is usually because you and the other person want different things.

When this happens you can keep arguing until the stronger, or meaner, or more stubborn person gets his or her way; or you can negotiate and compromise. Negotiating is offering to give up some of what you want and listening to the other person's answer.

Listening is the most important part. If the other person says, "OK!", we will hear him just fine. But it's important to remember that not all kids know about negotiating. He may say, "OK" and feel like he is giving in. That could leave him resentful. If it seems like the other person is disappointed or resentful, it doesn't hurt to tell him that you are negotiating. You can say something like, "That was my first idea. Do you have any ideas about how we can work this out?"

Or, she may say, "No" thinking that your offer to negotiate is a demand. She may not know you are willing to hear her ideas. Again, it is a good idea to let her know you are willing to give and take. "Before you say "no", please think about what I said. We can work this out if we work together."

It is also important to remember that sometimes "yes" means "yes" and "no" means "no". When your offer to negotiate comes up against a big fat "NO", there are three things you can do:

Repeat your offer

Change your offer

Accept that you can't resolve this conflict

This last one is hard. When you are in conflict with someone who will not cooperate, after you have tried your best, you are only left with three options:

Fight

This is not much of an option. As I said before, you may find out who wins and loses, but fighting will not resolve the conflict. Fighting is trouble everywhere. Even if you are not "caught", kids not directly involved will want to stay clear of you.

Leave the scene

Leaving is a lot better than fighting. It is not the same as passively giving in. It is also not sulking or a spiteful kind of behavior ("If you won't let me play, I'll take my ball and go home."). It's recognizing that trouble is coming, and trouble will not fix anything. Before you leave you can say something like, "I can see you are not willing to work this out." or, "There's no need to keep talking if you won't compromise." That makes it clear you are not passively giving in.

Find an adult

This is not a popular thing to do. Adults have earned a reputation of punishing both kids, even if only one has caused trouble. The trick is to find the adult before there is trouble. When the other person wants to fight the second there is conflict, or when the conflict is over something so important you just cannot negotiate, finding an adult does both of you a favor.

Too often when kids get an adult to settle a dispute, they worry too much about winning. If you both talk at once and start blaming each other, it is impossible to help you negotiate.

If you can keep calm and take turns presenting the facts to adults, most of the time they can help you negotiate. Think of them as umpires

who will make a call according to the evidence they hear. If the other person insists on trouble, the trouble you may have after finding an adult will still be less than if you tried to settle it on your own. The way to keep from getting a reputation as someone who "runs to the teacher" is to, again, stay calm and present the facts. NO BLAMING!

The compromise part of "negotiate and compromise" is easy. The only hard part is accepting that you have to give up something. But "giving up" may only mean putting off or sharing. When you are done negotiating, you have reached a compromise. When you have reached a compromise, make sure you both agree with your results. Shaking hands or just saying, "Is it a deal?" is a good way of making sure you agree.

Negotiation and compromise take practice. To start practicing, we can go back to a situation we talked about several weeks ago--the one about deciding if you should help a friend study for her test or study for your own. We offered some solutions to this problem that were really beginning negotiations. Now you can practice by reading different ways the situation might have continued, and continuing the negotiation until you reach a compromise. Write down what you think you and the other person would say.

You said, "I don't need the whole evening to study for my exam so I can spend half the evening helping you."

She said, "Half an evening is not enough. I need a lot of help, and you promised."

You said _____

_____

_____

She said _____

_____

_____

You said _____

_____

_____

She said _____

_____

_____

You said, "I have another friend who is good at the subject you need to study. You can call up the second friend and ask if he will help you study."

He said, "I don't know this other friend. I don't want a stranger to know how dumb I am."

You said _____

_____

_____

He said _____

_____

_____

You said _____

_____

_____

He said _____

_____

_____

You said, "I have my own test to study for. I'm sorry I can't help. Please understand."

She said, "I do understand about your test, but what about mine?"

You said _____

_____

_____

She said _____

_____

_____

You said_____

_____

_____

She said_____

_____

_____

You said, "I have my own test to study for, but you can call me if you run into trouble."

He said, "I'm having so much trouble we'll be on the phone all evening. It would be easier for you to come over and help me."

You said_____

_____

_____

He said_____

_____

_____

You said_____

_____

_____

He said_____

_____

ENTERING GROUP ACTIVITIES

It is not surprising that becoming involved with group activities means having more friends. Several things about groups make it easier to make friends.

Groups have a purpose. This purpose automatically gives you something in common with the other kids in the group.

Groups usually have a set time to get together. That means that you will be with the same kids on a regular basis.

Groups have goals and activities. Working and planning toward a goal makes better friends than hanging around waiting for something to happen.

There are all kinds of groups. Some are formal and some are informal. We often call the informal ones cliques (pronounced clicks). They are just groups of kids who choose to do things together. Cliques can seem like a bad thing when they exist mostly to keep kids out. They can just be kids who have a lot in common and like each other.

Formal groups have goals and activities. They also usually have rules and some kind of adult leader. They include all sorts of clubs, teams and groups and can be run by schools, churches and communities. Some formal groups, like sports teams and band, require special skills. Others, like church groups or some kinds of 4-H clubs, may require that you belong to a certain church or be able to raise a certain kind of livestock.

Most places have enough kinds of groups for kids your age that everyone can belong to something. I bet there are so many groups around that you don't even know about all of them.

Working with your "ropes" group, think of all the kinds of groups you could belong to. It doesn't matter if it is a group that doesn't match your skills or interests. Try to make the list as long as you can.

SCHOOL GROUPS

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

COMMUNITY GROUPS

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

CHURCH GROUPS

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

That was a lot of groups. Some of you already belong to a lot of them. Some of you don't. There are good reasons for not belonging to a group. Some reasons are not so good.

If the reason you don't belong to a group is because you are not a good enough football player or don't belong to a particular church, that is not the group for you. But much of the time we can get over the hurdles that keep us from being in a group if we work at it.

The kinds of hurdles I'm talking about are things like expense, transportation, time, and the fear we won't be accepted by the group.

Expense

Many group activities cost money. You need equipment, uniforms or dues. Sometimes your parents just can't afford to add one more thing to the family budget. When this happens, they are not being unreasonable. They need the money for other things.

You still may be able to join the group. Many groups have ways of covering expenses besides the parents paying them. You won't know unless you ask. The adult leader will know. Don't do this until you have cleared it with your mom and dad. It could embarrass them if you tell someone outside the family that you don't have enough money.

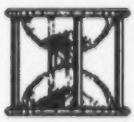
Another strategy that can work is asking your parents if the money you need to join a group can be a Christmas or birthday present, maybe with several relatives chipping in. That can be a very good present because belonging to a group keeps on being fun.

Transportation

Transportation can be a real problem if the group meets after school, or at night, or at different people's houses. Your parents may not have enough time or cars to help you get where you need to be. The solution is to ask about transportation, first thing. Often you can hitch a ride with another person in the group.

If someone has to go out of his way, be sure to offer a little money for gas once in a while. Again, the adult leader can help set this up. It is important to make arrangements at the beginning. Often, if you try to make a separate arrangement for each activity, you will find yourself missing group. When you don't come, it is easy to feel that you have missed out and let the group down---and drop out of the group.

Time



Time always has an effect on how many group activities you can jump into. With school work, chores, and maybe a job, it can be hard to squeeze in another thing. Joining a group becomes another chance to check out your priorities. If making more friends is a high priority, joining a group should be a high priority. However, if you need the time for school work or your family counts on you for certain chores, they come first.

Fear that the Group Will Not Accept You

This is a major reason kids don't get involved in group activities. It's easy to join a group most of your friends are already in. It's a lot harder if the other group members are not your friends. If making more friends is one reason you are joining the group, don't let it become a hurdle.

Everyone is a beginner the first time. It is amazing how it only takes a few times to feel like an old hand. That's why groups work so well.

By having structure, that is ready-made things to do together, you already have something in common with the other kids. The great thing is that you still have something in common the next time you see them.

So you've joined a group. Now what? Now you let things happen. You're new, so you don't know everything. Watch, listen, and ask questions. You don't have to take over or be an expert on everything. You also don't have to have fun every second. If the group is worthwhile, there will be real work along with the fun.

If there is no group that you can join or that interests you, start one. You may have a hobby, an interest, or play a sport most kids don't. Or you may only have a little free time. Maybe you play Nintendo, cross-country ski, raise rabbits, like to cook or _____. Chances are someone has the same interest. Ask. Put up a sign. Ask to have it announced in school. It's more fun in a group!

NO TALKING!
Groucho Marx said, "I wouldn't belong to a club that would have me as a member."
That's strange!
Why is that so strange?
I didn't know Groucho Marx knew you!

Getting Along at Home

The best thing about getting along at home is that it takes the same skills as getting along with your friends. Assertive communication, negotiation and compromise work just as well with family members as they do with friends.

Of course families are different. Families have to live together whether or not they get along. They are made up of people of different ages. Families are made up of people related to each other in different ways.

Families can be made up of brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, stepfathers, stepmothers, stepbrothers and stepsisters, half brothers and sisters, adoptive brothers and sisters, foster brothers and sisters, mother's and father's boyfriends or girlfriends, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles.....and you!

The best thing about families is that no matter what kinds of relatives are in a family, they can all be good families. A family can be just you and your mom, or all kinds of other people. If everyone does his job, the family can do what it has to do.

That may be kind of a new way of thinking about families: as a group of related people who have certain duties and obligations to each other. In other words, to make a family work, there are things you have to do for your family and things other family members have to do for you.

You may think of very specific things family members do, like you take out the garbage, your brother dries dishes, and your dad earns money. If you think about it, there are things you and other members of your family do for each other that you may take for granted.

List as many things as you can think of that your family does for you.

List as many things as you can think of that you do for your family.

Isn't it surprising how much you depend on your family and your family depends on you? Of course sometimes you feel like your family lets you down, and sometimes you let your family down. This is the main cause of conflict in families. When conflict happens, the "getting along" skills you learned will help. **Your family deserves the best, so treat them at least as well as you would your friends**.

This can be easier said than done. Sometimes a family member has a special kind of problem, or is in a special kind of trouble. When this happens, it can make family life pretty miserable. It could be a problem with drugs or alcohol, a problem with money, or a problem with another family member.

You probably can't fix these kinds of big problems by yourself, but there are things you can do to keep from being hurt as much by the problem. You need a special kind of consultant to help. Ask! Keep asking until you find someone who knows what to do.

By now you are probably saying, "When dealing with a friend who was unreasonable, we were supposed to leave rather than fight. You can't just leave your family. What am I supposed to do?"

You're right. It is more complicated with families. You have to work things out. Since you have to work things out, families have rules. They are not exactly like the rules in school. They usually are not written down, and it may seem like your parent or other adult in the family just makes them up as they go along.

Sometimes that is exactly what they are doing. They have to. You are at an age where the rules that are right for you are changing all the time. You can do things you couldn't do just a year ago. You are more mature and more responsible. Sometimes it seems like you parents want to treat you like a little kid and other times like an adult. And sometimes you are not sure

which you would rather be. Making rules which continue to fit you as you get older is one of the hardest things parents have to do.

Sometimes they miss the mark by not really understanding what you are ready for. And sometimes you miss the mark in judging what you are ready for.

The best thing you can do is make sure you know what the rules are at home. Some rules you know for sure. Others you may need to ask about.

Write down the family rules you know for sure.

Write down the rules you need to ask about.

Conflicts in your family are a great place to use negotiating and compromising skills. Remember, blaming and fighting don't work any better with parents than they do with friends. Never forget that compromise means you have to give up something.

Families aren't all fights and hassles. Your family probably has its own rituals. Rituals are things a family does in a certain way, at a certain time, that mean a lot to family members. Don't miss the fun of rituals because you are afraid other kids will think you are uncool.

Getting Along in School

Getting along in school is a full-time job. You have to get along with teachers and other kids, and you have to do as well as you can in your subjects. We have already talked about getting along with other kids. You will find yourself getting along with teachers if you do well in your subjects.

It all boils down to three things:

Getting better grades

Staying out of trouble

Having fun

These three keys to getting along in school are really hooked together. If you are doing well in your subjects, you won't be bored. If you are not bored, you are less likely to get into trouble. If you are not constantly in trouble, you will have more fun.

I know. That's a lot of "if's." It sounds like we're saying, "School is easier for really smart kids." Brilliant!

It's true. School is easier for some kids than for others. If you are one of the lucky ones, you probably skipped this part and are looking ahead for the next cartoon.

But,

if you have ever been scared to death to get a test back,

or,

if you ever felt bored and restless because you didn't have a clue what the teacher was talking about,

or,

if you have ever felt your face catch on fire because the teacher was going to make you read out loud,

or,

you have ever felt half sick all morning because you knew that at exactly 11:05 A.M. you were going to get yelled at because you didn't have your homework done,

or,

it is too hard so you decided to just quit trying,

THIS NEXT PART IS FOR YOU!

(By the way, you just read a sentence with twelve clauses and 104 words. Not bad for someone who has trouble in school!)

GETTING ORGANIZED

I'll start with the bad news. There is no way to do well in school without doing the work. The main difference between the kid who breezes through school and the kid who has constant hassles is that one has found a way to get the work done without letting it ruin his life. The other lets work make him feel like he's in jail, and he doesn't even get the work done.

Getting organized means controlling three things:

Place. Having a place to work that is quiet, comfortable and convenient.

Time. Having regular times to work that are long enough to get your work done, but don't conflict with other things you have to do or want to do.

Tools. The tools you need for work can be the obvious things like paper, pencils and school books. There are other kinds of tools, too. Making sure you have the instructions you need to complete an assignment, and bringing information from class, like notes, outlines and study guides, will help you get organized.

Before I start talking about place, time and tools, I want to mention one special tool: your teachers. They are the best consultants for their subjects. Teachers don't just know about teaching. They also know about learning.

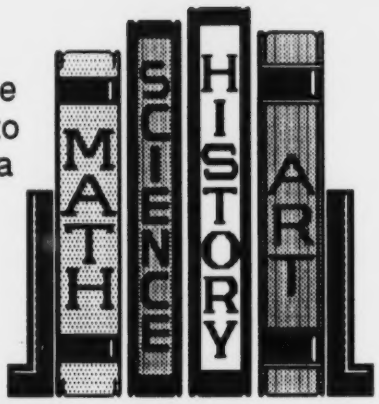
The problem they have is that they have to worry about twenty or thirty kids who all may learn in slightly different ways. They have to teach in a way that fits most kids in the class. It may not be the way that fits you.

When you are having trouble in a subject, the natural thing is to want to become invisible. What the kid who knows the ropes does is just the opposite. He makes a big fuss. He makes sure the teacher knows just what is giving him trouble. When the teacher knows what the problem is, he or she can almost always suggest something that makes it clearer or easier. Try it! If it doesn't work, you can write me a nasty letter.

PLACE

Where you work can really make a difference. You can't get much done if you are in the center ring of a three-ring circus. You also cannot expect the other members of your family to tiptoe around you like you are the only person in the house.

There are books that give suggestions about the kind of place you should have to do homework. It seems like they think everyone lives in a big house with lots of rooms. You are supposed to have a desk with a comfortable chair, a row of books across the back, and a light shinning over your left shoulder. They have never been to my house.



Something that works for a lot of kids who need a place to work is a simple cardboard box. They are free, don't take up much space, and make a pretty good portable office.

Being portable is important because, if you live in a house that has more people than rooms, you need to find your own space. A good solid box will hold all the paper, pencils and books you need. You won't lose anything, and your brothers and sisters are less likey to walk off with something of yours if they have to get into your box to do it.

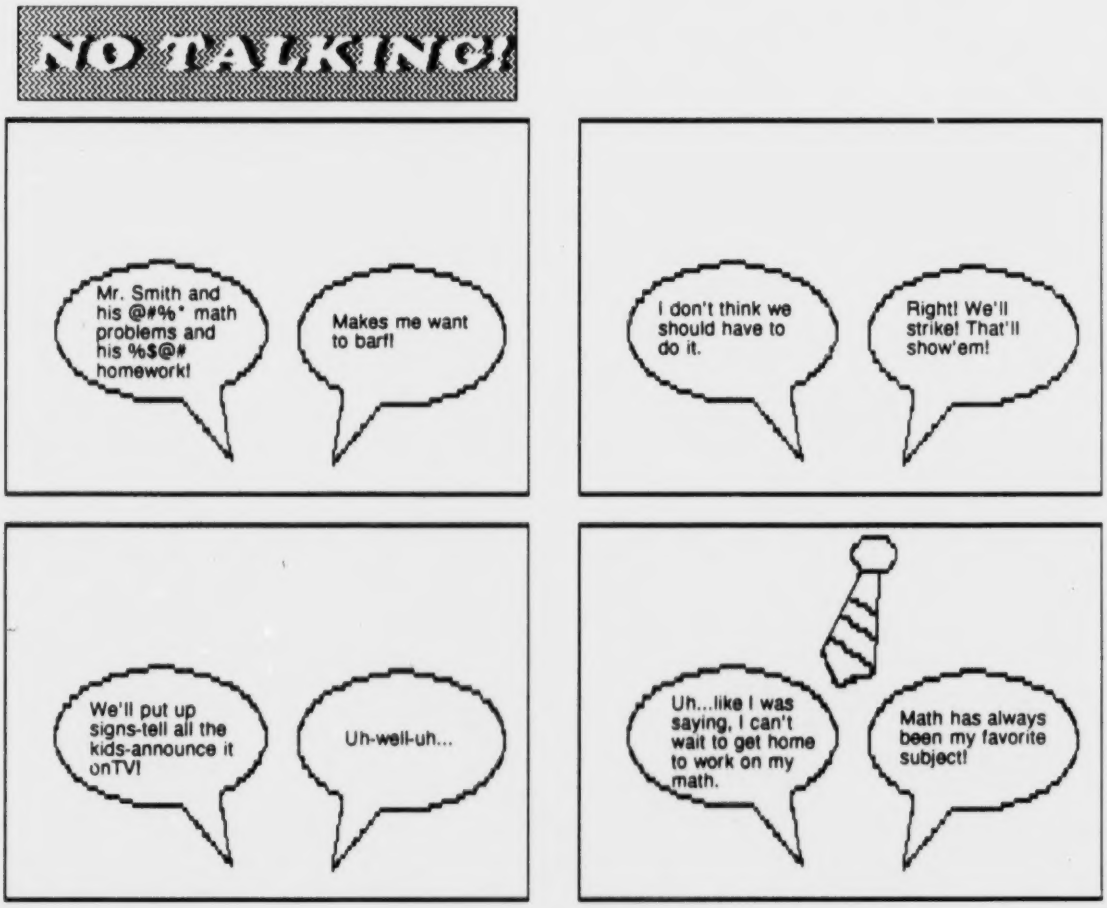
In a pinch, a good box makes a pretty good desk. I recommend the kind copy paper comes in. They are stiffer than usual and come with lids. If you can stake out the kitchen table, great, but sitting on the floor is not so bad. If anyone complains about ruining your posture, tell him he can come to your house every evening, throw everyone out of the kitchen and clear off the table for you.

One more tip: when you find a place to work, make sure everyone knows that it is your work place. But don't expect them to leave you alone if you pick a spot in front of the TV! Speaking of TV, it is not a good idea to study in front of the TV. Some studies have shown that some music in the background may help as a change of pace. "In the background" does not mean heavy metal cranked up

to the max! This sentence is here because you are not supposed to leave the last few words of a paragraph at the top of a page. They call them orphans, I guess, because they are left all alone.

TIME

Time is at least as important for getting work done as having a place. One of the nice things about time is that everyone has exactly the same amount of it. Some people cram a lot of activities into the time they have, while others are more comfortable with lots of breathing room. The important thing is that time is set aside for the things you absolutely have to do.


NO TALKING!
Mr. Smith and his @#%* math problems and his %$@# homework!
Makes me want to barf!
I don't think we should have to do it.
Right! We'll strike! That'll show'em!
We'll put up signs-tell all the kids-announce it onTV!
Uh-well-uh...
Uh...like I was saying, I can't wait to get home to work on my math.
Math has always been my favorite subject!

Sometime it seems like time shrinks. This happens most when you have had a project due for several weeks and you're down to the last few days. Funny how there are suddenly all these important things to do like washing your shoe laces or taking your goldfish for a walk.

This is less likely to happen if you have a schedule. Can you imagine school without a schedule? What if every morning the teachers got together and decided which class to have first period, which to have second period, and so on. You would never know what was happening!

You listed your classes earlier. Now you need to get a schedule for out-of-school time. You won't have every minute filled like school time. Just list the things you have to do and when you have to do them.

MONDAY	**ACTIVITY**	**FROM_____ o'clock to____o'clock**
TUESDAY	**ACTIVITY**	**FROM_____ o'clock to____o'clock**
WEDNESDAY	**ACTIVITY**	**FROM_____ o'clock to____o'clock**
THURSDAY	**ACTIVITY**	**FROM_____ o'clock to____o'clock**
FRIDAY	**ACTIVITY**	**FROM_____ o'clock to____o'clock**
SATURDAY	**ACTIVITY**	**FROM_____ o'clock to____o'clock**
SUNDAY	**ACTIVITY**	**FROM_____ o'clock to____o'clock**

You can see you have a busy schedule, but you also have quite a bit of free time. Now, if you are saying to yourself, "I bet he wants us to spend all this free time doing homework!", you're wrong. Of course you need time just for hanging out and having fun. (Not to mention eating and sleeping and practicing *Ropes*.)

You do need to spend some time on school work. Probably more than you are spending now. One of the things that makes school work so painful is that sometimes it has to be done at times when we really want to do something else. If this seems to be happening to you a lot, we need to get back to priorities.

You remember priorities. When it is nine o'clock the night before an assignment is due, you only have one priority left. You have lost your freedom to choose. It rarely has to be that way. The secret is to start making decisions early so you still have some choices left.

Let's talk about TV. Some adults would like to see kids watch one hour of "TV worth watching" a day. That would be great but not very realistic. I know kids who spend an hour a day looking at *TV Guide*!

TV is already an area where you are very good at establishing your priorities. Most kids know what they want to watch at each time, each night. You also know that there are time slots where the best show is not much better than a blank screen.

If you start to plan early and slip homework into the TV schedule (and the rest of your schedule), you will find that you don't have to miss anything you really want to do. You may eventually stop looking at homework like it was something your dog found along the road.

PRIME TIME

List the TV shows you normally watch at each time each night. Rate them according to the *Ropes* Star System.

★ ***This show is basically a waste of electricity. It would not be a bad idea to set aside this time every week for homework.***

★★ ***Two stars are reserved for a show that is merely OK. If I'm done with homework and there is nothing really fun to do, I'll watch it.***

★★★ ***These are shows I really hate to miss. They are such a high priority I need to make sure I am caught up with school work before they are on, even if it means passing up some two star shows.***

Monday

	show	**rating**
7:00		
7:30		
8:00		
8:30		
9:00		
9:30		

Tuesday

	show	rating
7:00		
7:30		
8:00		
8:30		
9:00		
9:30		

Wednesday

	show	rating
7:00		
7:30		
8:00		
8:30		
9:00		
9:30		

Thursday

	show	rating
7:00		
7:30		
8:00		
8:30		
9:00		
9:30		

Friday	show	rating
7:00		
7:30		
8:00		
8:30		
9:00		
9:30		

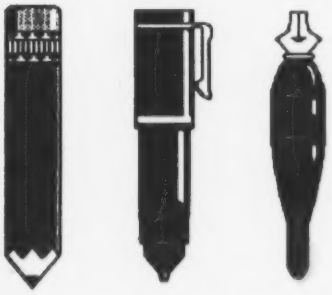
Saturday	show	rating
7:00		
7:30		
8:00		
8:30		
9:00		
9:30		

Sunday	show	rating
7:00		
7:30		
8:00		
8:30		
9:00		
9:30		

If you were honest, I bet you found enough one-star shows to give you time to get your work done. You can also rate your other activities and pastimes on a star system.

Now comes what you all have been waiting for: the secret of getting homework done without having to give up anything really important. It really is simple. **Even when you have no homework due and no tests coming up, still spend the time you have prioritized for homework on homework.**

Homework hurts when you have to work all day and all night catching up. You miss other things that are really important to you. If you work everyday, you will be caught up when time starts running out. The total amount of time you spend will be about the same, but you will choose when.



TOOLS

The obvious kinds of tools you need for school work are usually not a problem. Other kinds of tools are more important. They call this the information age because there is a lot of information. There is also a lot of information about information.

School works the same way. There is the information that you are supposed to learn. That is the information in text books and classes that you are tested over. Then there is the information about this information. In school this includes:

- notes
- outlines
- study guides

- exercises
- outside reading

All these things are necessary. They make it easier, not harder, to learn the information you are supposed to learn. It's a radical idea, but teachers assign these activities to make it easier for you. If you had to sit down with a text book and memorize every fact, understand every idea, and work every problem, it would be a lot harder.

A lot of kids get bogged down in these **secondary** activities. They either never learned to do them well or they think it will take less time if they skip them. I teach a lot of college kids who end up cooking hamburgers because they continue to believe they should skip these activities all the way through high school and college.

The first tool that can help is making sure you get instructions right the first time. Your teachers probably remind you to write down instructions and directions. That's great for homework and big assignments. What about explanations that are given in the middle of class? If you don't understand something at the beginning of class, the rest of class is a lost cause.

For me, one of the hardest things to do is say that I don't understand something in front of a group of people. That is hard for most people. You think you are the only one who doesn't understand, when there are probably several kids who don't undertand. Your teachers aren't mind readers. If no one asks for more explanation, you won't get it.

To help with this, check out the next page. You fold it like a pup tent and set it on your desk. When everything is cool, keep the "I UNDERSTAND" side toward the teacher. When it starts getting a little fuzzy, turn it around so the teacher can see the "HELP" side. It lets the teacher know to explain more clearly, and you don't have to admit you don't understand in front

I UNDERSTAND

FOLD

HELP!

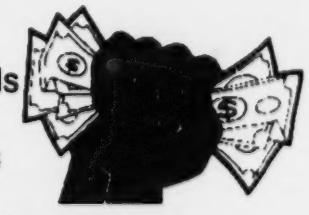
of everyone. You can also be sure you are not the only one turning the table tent around. A lot of other kids feel just like you when they don't understand something.

All of the information "tools" I mentioned have one thing in common: they take all of the information you need about a subject and boil it down to the facts and ideas that are most important. So taking notes and making outlines and writing book reports are not extra work. They are tools that let you do less work!

Imagine that the only kind of money we had were pennies. Every time you bought something you would have to lug around all these pennies. You would have to count them out before you left home and count them again when you paid for something. Fifty dollars worth of groceries would take 5,000 pennies! You would need help carrying them to the store and it would take an hour to go through the checkout.

School work comes in pennies. You start with every word of the text book and everything that happens in class. If you don't change all these thousands of facts into bigger units (like pennies into dollars), you will be lugging around so many facts you will never complete an assignment or know what to study for a test.

Teachers and text books start the process of making change. Books have chapter headings and section headings and words in **bold** or *italic* type. Teachers repeat things, write on the board and prepare study guides. When a fact or idea is made to stand out, you have a dollar instead of a penny. Write it down. It's important.



Finding dollars is the easiest way to make school work manageable. It calls for a special kind of listening and reading. The way books and teachers work is pretty much the same. They start with, "Here is a dollar (or five dollars or ten dollars)," and go on to explain why it's a dollar instead

of a penny or dime. If you can tell the dollars from the dimes, school work gets easier.

Taking notes and making outlines are ways of remembering which facts are dollars. Outlines do it by organizing words a lot like numbers are organized in the decimal system.

I. dollars
  A. quarters
    1. dimes
      a. pennies

Each column represent different units, like ones, tens and hundreds in math. And, like math, the farther left you go, the more important the topic gets.

Of course it is impossible to make an outline in class. It goes too fast, and you can't tell if the next thing is more or less important than the last thing. So, you take notes. Note taking often becomes a race to write down as much as possible. Even if you could write down everything, you would end up with a page full of pennies.

We saw before that teachers give you hints about where the dollars are hidden: repeating, emphasizing, or writing things on the board. You have to make sure you are listening for these hints and have a way of putting them into your notes.

You may have noticed that the **Ropes** book uses a lot of different ways of separating dollars from dimes and pennies and different topics from one another. You have seen bullets ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ and **different** kinds of type, and words in **bold**, *italic*, underline,

or different sizes.

You can't get that fancy while you are trying to take notes. There are things you can do to make important things stand out.

You can underline, USE ALL CAPITALS, circle, and * star important topics. You may have a better system to help you look at your notes and quickly tell the really important from the not-so-important.

For practice, use just the section of *Ropes* labeled "Tools" and identify the *dollars*, *dimes*, and *pennies* in the text.

DOLLARS

DIMES

PENNIES

These simple hints are not going to make school easy for everyone. Ask your teachers about other ways you can make it easier for yourself.

Sometimes there are situations that keep you from doing well in school that seem to be out of your control. It can be something like not being able to read very well or having problems at home that keep you from concentrating or getting your work done.

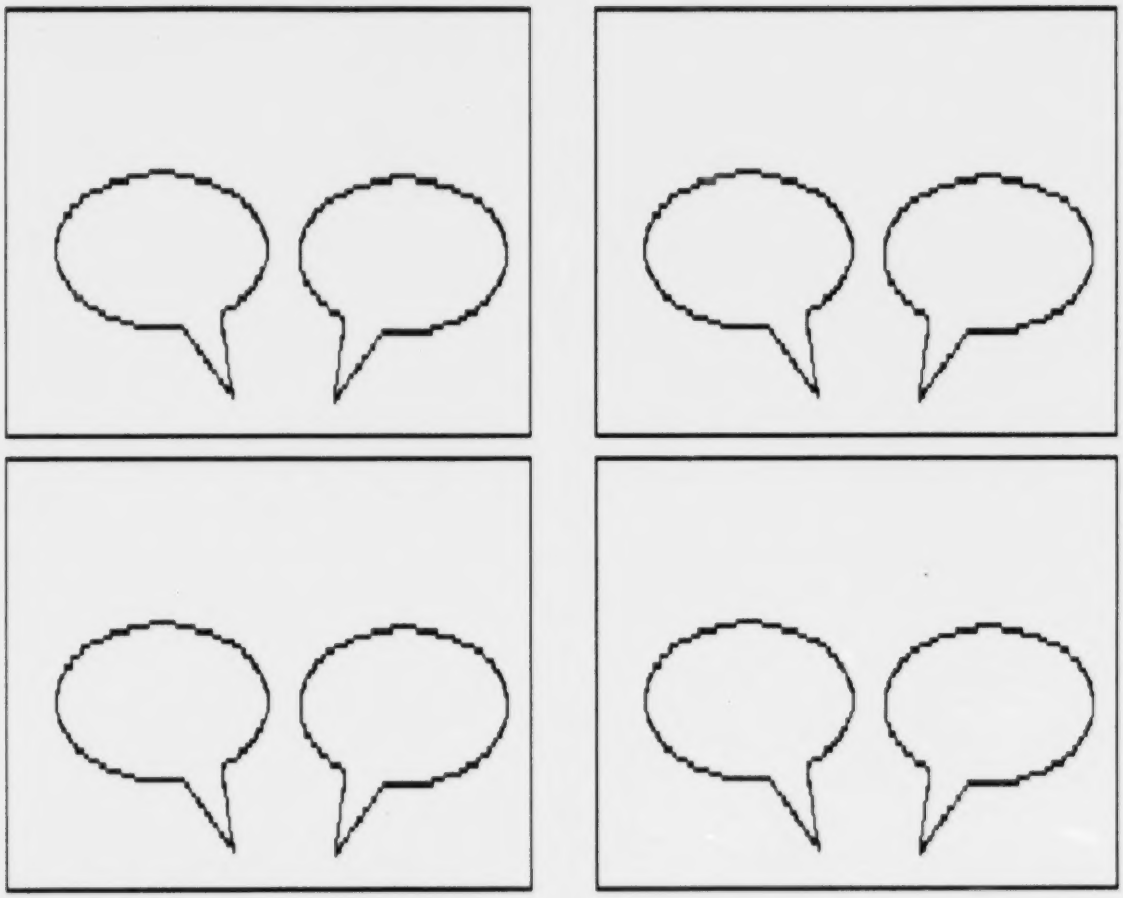
Even if you are someone who seems to get into trouble more because of things like conduct and attendance, keeping on top of school work helps these other school problems. If something is scary, embarrassing, or overwhelming, other problems will happen.

When you have a flat tire, there is nothing to do but try to fix it. You don't need to feel ashamed if you have to ask for help because you are unlucky and don't have a pump. Since you are not bad or dumb, but unlucky, there is no reason not to ask for help.

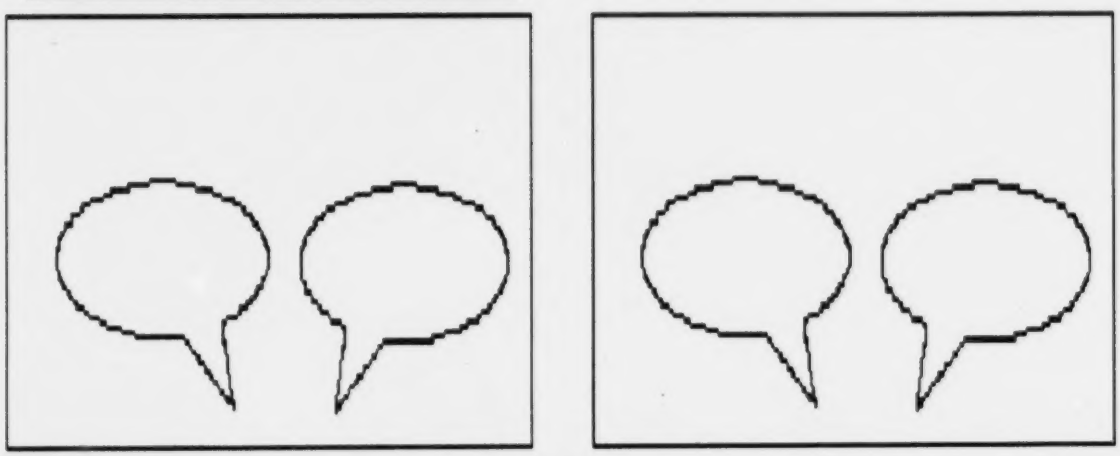
Other kids, or even parents, might see problems as having to do with good or bad, or smart or dumb. It really has more to do with being lucky or unlucky. You should be one of the lucky ones since you know the ropes and you have consultants. Talk to your consultants and see if they can help you.

NO TALKING!
I guess we're about done
Not me! I have a lot more to say
You mean the blank panels on the next page?
Right! I hope someone will put some really funny words in my mouth!

NO TALKING!



NO TALKING!



Congratulations

You have completed the *Knowing the Ropes* group. Life should be easier and more hassle-free. You can never know all the ropes because you keep changing and the world keeps changing. It would get pretty boring if it didn't.

I hope the tools and strategies you learned in *Ropes* keep working for you as you face new situations and challenges. One of the new challenges you will be facing is becoming a *Showing the Ropes* tutor. Sharing what you know can be fun. It can also help you see new ways of using what you learned in your own life.

Now, kick back and take it easy for a while. You've earned it!

Certificate of

AUTHORIZATION TO

"SHOW THE ROPES"

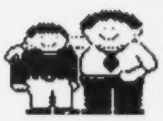
AWARDED TO

_____

SHOWING THE ROPES

You have worked hard. You have read and practiced and experimented with new ways of doing things. I hope you have discovered that life has gotten a little easier because you know the ropes.

You are older. Being older means taking on more responsibility. It also means having more privileges. One responsibility all of us have as we get older is sharing our experience and knowledge with those younger or less experienced. Parents help their children. Older brothers and sisters help younger brothers and sisters. Master craftsmen help apprentices. Veteran ball players help rookies. **It's the way the world works.**



Human beings do not have many instincts. We can't get up and walk around right after we're born like a calf or colt. We can't leave the nest for the first time and automatically know how to find food or build a nest like birds. Someone has to show us how to do almost everything. Human history is a long cycle of individuals learning something and then showing that something to someone else.

You are the best possible person to show another kid the ropes. At some time in your life (or once a day), you have said that adults just don't understand. You are absolutely right. We don't understand. We know something about the skills a kid needs to make it through middle school or junior high. We do not know about the pressures and problems you face that didn't exist when we were kids.

Now you understand and have mastered the skills to help you get along. This combination of skills and understanding makes you a very valuable and

important person. You can teach another kid the skills you have learned (and how to use them) better than any adult, or better than a kid who doesn't have a clue.

There are two main parts to learning to *Show the Ropes*. The first is mastering some skills about tutoring. The second is learning some tips and suggestions about tutoring *Knowing the Ropes*, specifically.

Tutoring is easy. You have done it all your life. Any time you have shown another kid how to shoot a hook shot, or put on makeup, or make a paper airplane, you have been a tutor.

Since tutoring is a personal kind of teaching, being a good tutor means doing what any good teacher does. It also means doing what any good friend does. You have learned some of the skills needed for being a good friend in *Ropes*.

To be a good peer tutor, you have to apply some of these skills to being a friend and teacher to someone who is probably a little younger than you. And, since he is just learning the ropes, he won't know as much about being a good friend to you.

Being a good peer tutor means more than just being a certain kind of person. You have to show the kid you are tutoring that you are that kind of person. You have to show him or her that you are caring, trustworthy, confident and understanding. If you can show up front that you have these qualities, the rest of the tutoring process becomes a lot easier.

While most of the time these qualities will show through because they are part of your personality, it doesn't hurt to plan how you will show them.

Caring **means showing that the other person is important to you, and that his or her progress in Ropes is important to you. Your client needs to know that he or she matters.** (A client is someone who receives a special service from an expert. You're the expert and tutoring is the special service. How about that!) **What can you do to show your client that you are caring?**

Trust **means that your client feels he or she can tell you things and make mistakes in front of you, and know that you won't make fun of him or her, tell other people, or use it against him or her. What can you do to show your client that you are trustworthy?**

Understanding **means that you can put yourself in your client's shoes and see things from his or her point of view. It means remembering what it was like before you knew the ropes, and appreciating that problems you have never had are still problems. What can you do to show that you are understanding?**

Confidence **means letting the client know that you know what you are talking about. It means showing that you have the skills, knowledge and patience to help him or her. What can you do to show that you are confident?**

OK. You've met with your client and done everything in your power to show him or her that you are the kind of person who makes a good tutor. You're sitting with your well-used, dog-eared copy of *Knowing the Ropes*, and your client is sitting with a brand-new, squeaky-clean copy of *Knowing the Ropes*. What are you going to do?

The first thing is to make sure you and the client understand that you are in a partnership with a common goal: making sure that he or she understands and masters the skills in *Knowing the Ropes*. Teaching never happens without learning. Teaching without learning is just talking.

We know a lot about the things that make learning easier. Most of them work best one-on-one. That's why tutoring is so important. A very old teacher once said that the secret to teaching was getting out of the students' way and allowing them to learn. What he meant was that his students learned best if he paid attention to basic principles of learning. The subject matter took care of itself. He believed that anyone could master algebra, grammar, or history. They would never be difficult or boring unless the teacher made them that way.

The same is true of *Knowing the Ropes*. If the tutor uses the principles that allow the client to learn, everyone will succeed. Some of these principles are:

- **Clients learn best when they are actively motivated**
  Being actively motivated means that he or she has positive reasons for learning. Positive reasons are <u>not</u> reasons like, "I have to.", "I'll fail if I don't." or, "I'll be punished if I don't learn." Positive reasons are the ways the skills learned in *Knowing the Ropes* make life easier and kids happier.

The tutor's job is to make sure the client knows the benefits that go with knowing the ropes. The time you spend explaining these benefits in the beginning will make tutoring easier for both you and your client.

What can I do to make sure my client is actively motivated?

- Clients learn best by having concrete experiences
  Concrete experiences mean that learning is easier when you and your client do something, rather than just talk about or think about something. Role playing is one of the best ways of providing concrete experiences.

What are some other ways you can give your client concrete experiences?

- **Clients learn best when they have options**
  Options mean choices. Different kids have different ways of learning. Your client may learn differently than you. If you offer some choices about how to master the *Ropes* material, you will move farther, faster. You need to be flexible about when, where and how learning takes place. It's a place to use negotiation and compromise.

NO TALKING!
Hi! What's new?
I met with my client for the first time today.
I'm going to meet with mine tomorrow. How did it go?
Not too well. This kid is really clueless!
It can't be that bad.
Yes it can. You can tell he is the kind of kid who is going to have trouble.
Why do you say that?
He reminds me of me!

What can I do to offer my client options?

- Clients learn best when they are satisfying their own interests and needs

  The skills practiced in *Knowing the Ropes* can be used in all kinds of situations. The most important situations are those your client is interested in and worries about. Your most important interest is in being a good tutor!

What can you do to satisfy your client's interests and needs?

- **Clients learn best when they are accepted for their own learning style and rate**

We mentioned before how different kids learn differently. They also learn at different speeds. If learning takes place too quickly, kids become confused and discouraged. If it takes place too slowly, kids become bored. It is best if you can adjust your pace to your client's. Remember: different is neither better nor worse, just different.

What can you do to accept your client's learning style and pace?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- **Clients learn best when they succeed**

Anyone can succeed at learning if the learner's style, pace, interests and needs are considered. Trying, learning one's strengths and weaknesses, and experimenting with different ways of learning are all ways of succeeding. They are not the same as mastering the material, but they lead to mastering the material.

How can you help your client succeed?

NUTS AND BOLTS

You are probably saying to yourself that you have learned some neat things, but what now? You have been given this kid's name who is supposed to be your client, but you still have more questions than answers. In this section I will try to answer some of these questions and offer you some tips on solving some of the tutoring problems you may run into.

Q. *How often should I meet with my client, and for how long?*

A. The answer to this question depends on a number of things: how much help he or she needs, how often the *Knowing the Ropes* group meets, and how much time you have. A good rule of thumb is to count on at least an hour a week. Two half hour meetings are better than one whole hour. Three twenty minute meetings or

four fifteen minute meetings are just fine. It depends on your schedule and how you and your client can work together without getting antsy. Of course it won't hurt to get together for more than an hour a week if your client needs the help.

Q. *Where should I meet with my client?*

A. Unless your school gives you a private office with a sign saying, **ME, PEER TUTOR,** on the door, you will have to be creative to find places to meet. Some schools have clubs or activities period. Many don't. Luckily, peer tutoring doesn't need a lot of fancy equipment. Any place you can talk without being disturbed or overheard will work. Some suggestions are:

- Before school
- After school
- At lunch
- On the bus
- At each other's houses
- Over the phone (make sure it's not long distance)

In addition to regular meetings, it is a good idea to keep in touch and check out how your client is doing. This can be done in a couple of minutes, between classes, on the playground or in a grocery store. He or she may not tell you if there are problems unless you ask him or her. It also sends a message that you really are concerned with your client's progress.

Q. *I have found a place and time to meet. How do I start?*

A. The first thing you do is get comfortable. Spend a few minutes talking about the weather or the big game or whatever. Also, show your client that you are interested in him or her as a person. Ask about his or her family, hobbies, interests and stuff like that. You probably have something in common.

When you are comfortable, ask your client how far he or she has gotten in the *Ropes* course. Then you can ask if there are any problems. Your client will probably say everything is fine whether it is or not. The next step is to review what he or she has done by looking at anything he or she has written and asking about what he or she got out of group.

If there seems to be a problem with a particular part, it is a good idea to ask your client to read that part out loud. The problem may simply be that your client has trouble reading or understanding the material or instructions. If the problem is something else, there are going to be tips for each part of *Ropes* later.

Q. *What do I do to get ready for a meeting with my client?*

A. The most important thing you can do is carefully review the parts of *Ropes* your client is working on. Try to remember what you found difficult or confusing. Chances are your client will run into trouble in exactly the same places.

Q. *What if my client just won't cooperate?*

A. That can happen for a lot of reasons. The first step is to ask your client, "What's wrong?". Most of the time you will get answers like, "Nothing!", "This is dumb!", "I don't want to." or, "I have better things to do."

Most of the time clients act like that for a hidden reason. They may be afraid to fail in front of you. They may be embarrassed by something *Ropes* is talking about. They may resent having to learn from another kid. Or they may just assume that anything that seems like school is going to be awful, because school has always been awful for them.

They may not be aware of their hidden reason. Don't accuse them of having a hidden reason. Give them a chance to do *Ropes* in a way that's comfortable for them. Negotiate. Ask if they can think of a way you could make *Ropes* more fun, or interesting, or easier. What they decide tells you a lot about why they are having trouble.

This won't always work. When it doesn't, and your client is just not getting it, remember: it is your client who is having a problem, not you. Be patient and know that you are doing your job.

Q. *What if my client seems to be doing just fine without my help?*

A. You're lucky. You have an opportunity to discuss the issues in *Ropes* with no pressure. Continue to meet with your client. There is always room for improvement!

Q. *How do I keep my client motivated?*

A. The word "motivate" comes from the same Latin word as "move". Motivating your client is making him or her want to move. Like cars, people need fuel in order to move. For people the best fuel is a kind of reward called **positive reinforcement**.

Positive reinforcement means that when someone does something well or correct, he or she is rewarded. The opposite is negative reinforcement, which means punishing someone when he or she does something poorly or incorrectly. Scientists have found that people learn better with positive reinforcement.

When someone does something brilliant or outstanding, it is easy to give positive reinforcement. Problems come when someone does something merely OK or even not-so-good. It is still possible to give positive reinforcement.

One of the first things you can do to make sure you can give your client positive reinforcement is to let him or her know what you expect. These expectations are things like being on time, listening, not joking around and trying. Although it is easy to meet these expectations, it is important to notice when your client does meet them. **Try to catch your client being good!**

Of course your client will not always meet your expectations. The best way to change bad behavior is to ignore it. To criticize, nag or scold calls attention to the bad behavior and makes it more likely that the behavior will happen again. Rewarding good behavior and ignoring bad behavior are both necessary.

Positive reinforcement is usually just a phrase or a few words that let the client know he or she is doing well. "Good! That's right! Yep, you're getting it." Positive reinforcement can also be a nod, a smile, a thumbs up or a high five. The important thing is to give the positive reinforcement when the good answer or good action happens. Don't save it up for later.

Q. *I have worked really hard at being a tutor, but my client has never thanked me and isn't friendly when we see each other outside of tutoring.*

A. This can happen. We talked in *Ropes* about having trouble paying compliments. Some kids also have trouble saying thank you. It doesn't mean he or she doesn't appreciate you. Besides, you know you did a good job!

KNOWING THE ROPES ABOUT *ROPES*

The easiest way to work through *Ropes* with your client would be to simply tell her all your answers. That is not the best way. Since the skills in *Ropes* use imaginary situations for practice, your client needs to figure out her answers by herself.

Your job is to offer hints when your client becomes bogged down and help him think of ways the material can be used in real life. The first step is to look at your client's work critically. That does not mean that you are looking for something to criticize. It means hunting for the good parts so you can offer praise, and hunting for the not-so-good parts so you will know what you and your client will need to think about and discuss.

Knowing the Ropes is about skill more than it is about knowledge. You can't just tell someone how to throw a curve or knit a sweater or show a calf. You have to show him how. Then you must practice with him and support and coach him when he tries the real thing.

Ropes is divided into parts rather than lessons. That is because not all kids learn at the same pace and not all *Ropes* groups meet the same amount of time. For most of the parts you can go through the same series of activities with your client. These are:

1. Discuss the material until you are sure your client understands it.

2. Look at anything your client has written to see how he or she is doing.

3. If the written parts are incomplete or way off base **help your client correct them by asking questions and giving hints, not telling answers.**

4. Practice the skill that part of *Ropes* is dealing with by role playing and talking about different ways that

skill can be used.

5. Develop a plan for when and with whom your client can use the skill in real life.

6. Begin the next session by asking if last session's skill got used and checking out how it worked.

It really is that simple. Some sections of *Ropes* don't have written parts for the kinds of skills you can practice. You can leave the steps out that don't apply.

A thing that isn't always so simple is remembering that the things your client tells about his real life are told in confidence. That means that what is said is only between you and your client. You don't go running to your best friend and say, "Guess what I found out about so-and-so."

There is one exception to this rule of confidentiality. That is when your client says something that you know is dangerous or illegal. Then you must tell someone. The best person to tell is probably the person who agreed to be your consultant if something dangerous were happening in your life. He or she will know what to do. Remember: even if your client tells you it's a secret, you must tell someone if the secret is something dangerous.

Got your *Ropes* book? Since you know your client, your school, and the kinds of kids in your school, the best ideas about tutoring each part of *Ropes* come from you. I am only going to point out which pages go with each part, and what should be accomplished. The

ideas are yours. It is a good idea to write down your good ideas before each session. It keeps you from forgetting them and helps you be more confident. Everyone has an occasional case of brain-lock. The cure is having something you can look at to get you back on track. I'll mark places for writing your ideas with the light bulb so you can find them quickly.

WHAT'S NEW (pages 2-4)

This part is pretty simple. Your client will have no problem with things like new teachers or courses. She will probably have more trouble with what's new about her and how her friends or social life have changed.

INVESTIGATING YOUR SCHOOL (pages 5-11)

Your client should have no problem with the basic investigation. Discovering which rules have changed since elementary school is harder. It is important that you let the client do the work on page eight.

Also, do not let your client "steal" your consultants. It is important that he chooses his own. It is important that you are sure your client knows what a consultant is and what kinds of things he may need consultants for. It's OK if his list ends up looking a lot like yours, as long as he did it himself.

MAKING PLANS (pages 11-17)

Making plans is so important it deserves a lot of time and effort. It is also interesting because you will learn a lot about your client. On pages 14-16 your client is asked to come up with her own problems and plan the solutions. These solutions are a chance to really put

your heads together and be a team. Only your client can know what makes a good plan for her particular problem, but you have the experience to offer suggestions that can help her in real life right away.

DECISION MAKING SKILLS (pages 21-45)

This is a very long section. It will take a lot of work and patience before your client has mastered decision making skills. Learning to use rules, results, right and wrong, priorities and feelings to make decisions is the hardest part.

Rules, results, right and wrong, priorities and feelings are hard to talk about because they are what are called **abstractions**. That means they only exist as ideas. You can't draw a picture of a priority or pick up a feeling and put it in your pocket. The only way you can learn about them is to talk about them, think about them and practice using them.

Although it is usually a boring way to learn, for this part it may be a good idea to read the section of the *Ropes* book (pages 22-25) dealing with these abstractions with your client. Stop and discuss one. Don't move on until you are sure your client is getting it. I am sure you can think of several different ways to make the meanings of rules, results, right and wrong, priorities and feelings clear.

Identifying feelings in yourself and others is so tricky that it has its own little section (pages 26-29). A good way to practice identifying feelings is to meet with your client in a public place, like the lunch room or playground, and watch other kids. I am sure it will not take long to spot someone with each kind of feeling. I am also sure you can think of other ways to practice identifying feelings.

Ropes lets your client practice decision making both by making decisions about stories and making real decisions. The hardest part is that decisions are seldom entirely good or bad. A bad decision for you may be a good decision for your client. So when you help your client practice decision making, it is important to put yourself in his or her shoes. The thing to watch is using good decision making skills, not the final decision.

PEER PRESSURE RESISTANCE (pages 46-52)

Learning the ways of saying "no" and avoiding trouble are not hard. Your client will catch on quickly. The difficult part is being quick enough to say "no" and make it stick while a situation is happening. Your client will need a lot of practice.

Peer pressure resistance is your chance to "go Hollywood". The peer pressure resistance section is built around role playing. Although your client will get some practice in *Ropes* group, it won't be nearly enough. Most of your time should be spent in role playing, with your client being the actor who has to figure out how to say "no" effectively. If he does not seem to be getting it, you can reverse roles so he can see how you do it. This is called **modeling.** It's a good way of tutoring. I know you can think of plenty of good scenes you can role play together.

MAKING AND KEEPING FRIENDS (pages 55-80)

This is another huge section. A lot of different skills go into making friends. Some of them are pretty complicated. The purpose of the first part of this section (pages 55-59) is to show that kids who are friends and kids who are not friends have many of the same qualities.

Most kids aren't in the habit of dividing people up into little pieces. You may have to give an example to start your client thinking about friends having several qualities. You don't have to name a particular person, just have someone in mind.

Being approving and supportive (pages 63-64) should be really familiar to a peer tutor. It is another way of describing positive reinforcement. You will be helping your client to be more approving and supportive all the time because you will be **modeling** that kind of behavior all the time. Compliments can be practiced with role plays, while **separating a person's action from his behavior** will work better with lots of examples and discussion.

Conflict resolution (pages 65-69) is only a few pages in the *Ropes* book. However, it is complicated. A lot of instructions (pages 68-69) are given about making assertive statements and observing other kids in conflict situations.

Plenty of practice and valuable experience are given in the exercises in the book. If you can help your client understand assertive behavior and guide him through the instructions for the *Ropes* exercises, you will be doing a good job. Think hard about how you will do this.

Negotiation and compromise (pages 70-75) is another area you can do a lot of tutoring by modeling. There will no doubt be times when you and your client do not completely agree on what you want to do. Solving this problem is an excellent opportunity to practice negotiation and compromise. When your client has learned about negotiation and compromise, the two of you will be able to quickly agree on almost anything.

Entering group activities (pages 76-80) is a section for you and your client to really brainstorm and figure out what kinds of groups are available that fit your client. The client who is shy or afraid of being involved with a group may come down with a case of the "yes, buts". Your client will respond to every suggestion you make with, "**Yes**, that sounds like a good group, **but** (fill in the blank with your favorite excuse)." The cure for the "yes, buts" is to be supportive but try to get your client to talk about the real reason he is reluctant to join

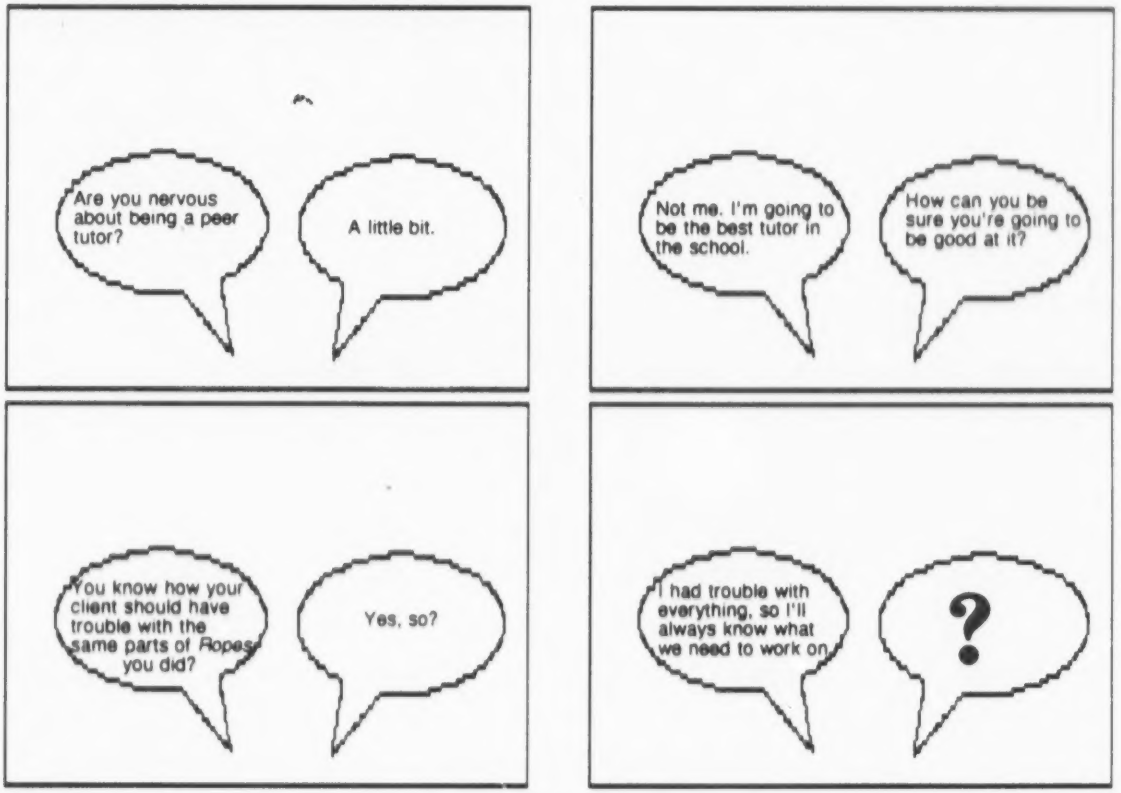
group. I am sure you will think of lots of ways to help your client join and enjoy a group.

Getting Along at Home (pages 81-86)

This section is not long or hard but still requires all your skills as a tutor and a friend. For a lot of kids, family life is a very sensitive area. There can be problems in families that are so big that *Ropes* can't help much. These kinds of problems are hard to talk about and hard to listen to.

It is especially hard not to judge. The fact that your client may criticize his parents or brothers and sisters does not give you that right. Helping your client identify family rules and using "getting along" skills at home is helping a lot. Patient listening may help your client get along at home more than anything else you can do.

NO TALKING!


Are you nervous about being a peer tutor?
A little bit.
Not me. I'm going to be the best tutor in the school.
How can you be sure you're going to be good at it?
You know how your client should have trouble with the same parts of *Ropes* you did?
Yes, so?
I had trouble with everything, so I'll always know what we need to work on.
?

GETTING ALONG IN SCHOOL (pages 87-103)

The best thing about this section is that you are part of a huge team. Your client, his teachers, and his family all want him to do well in school. With this many people wanting the same thing, your job is easy.

Your client has probably already found a place to study. Your job starts with helping him organize his time. This is the only time when it may be a good idea to show exactly what you wrote down when you first did the *Ropes* section on **Getting Organized.**

There is a good reason for this. A lot of kids think it is definitely uncool to spend much time on school work. By showing him your out-of-school schedule (page 93) and your TV rating chart, he will see that a kid who is definitely cool (you) spends time on school work. This may be the most powerful kind of modeling you can do. You still need to be creative in helping your client organize his time.

The **Tools** (pages 98-104) *Ropes* talks about most are note taking, outlining and ways of managing information. These are hard skills to practice in a short tutoring session because nothing is the same as really listening to a teacher talk in class or reading an assignment.

There are still ways you can help. Comparing different sized coins with different levels of information is one way of explaining about outlining and note taking. You may be able to think of different ways.

The tools section has a risk attached to it. Since it is about school work and homework, your client may want you to directly help with school work. It is fine for one student to help another with school work...if you want to. It is not fine to do someone's work for him. You may be tempted because you want to see your client do well and stay out of trouble.

You're done! You are now qualified to be a peer tutor for *Knowing the Ropes*. You may not quite believe you have had enough training. You have, if you remember that your real training was learning to know the ropes. Whenever you feel uncertain about how to help your client, go back to the *Ropes* book. Talk to other peer tutors. Talk to your facilitator. Trust yourself!

THE BEGINNING

You have one more important job as a peer tutor. It is necessary to track your client's progress. This is not the same as grading. Tracking is just what it sounds like: keeping track of how your client is doing and where he or she is doing well or needs extra help. Since he or she will know the ropes perfectly at the end, grades are unnecessary.

At the same time, it is important to keep track of your peer tutoring. I am sure you would like to know how long you actually spend at tutoring and how well you are doing. It is also important to keep track of your tutoring to be sure you are treating your client fairly. When you are especially busy, it is easy to put off or cancel meetings with your client. Keeping track will let you know if you are spending enough time with him or her.

The next page is a form which should make keeping track a little easier. Take a minute and fill it out after every meeting with your client. It will track your progress and your client's. It will give you something to look at before your next meeting to remind you of where you left off and what you need to work on next session.

CLIENT_____ **TUTOR**_____

DATE_____

TIME_____

LENGTH OF MEETING_____ **(minutes)**

Topics covered or pages in *Knowing the Ropes*

_____

_____

_____

Skills my client has mastered

_____

_____

_____

Skills my client needs to practice more

_____

_____

_____